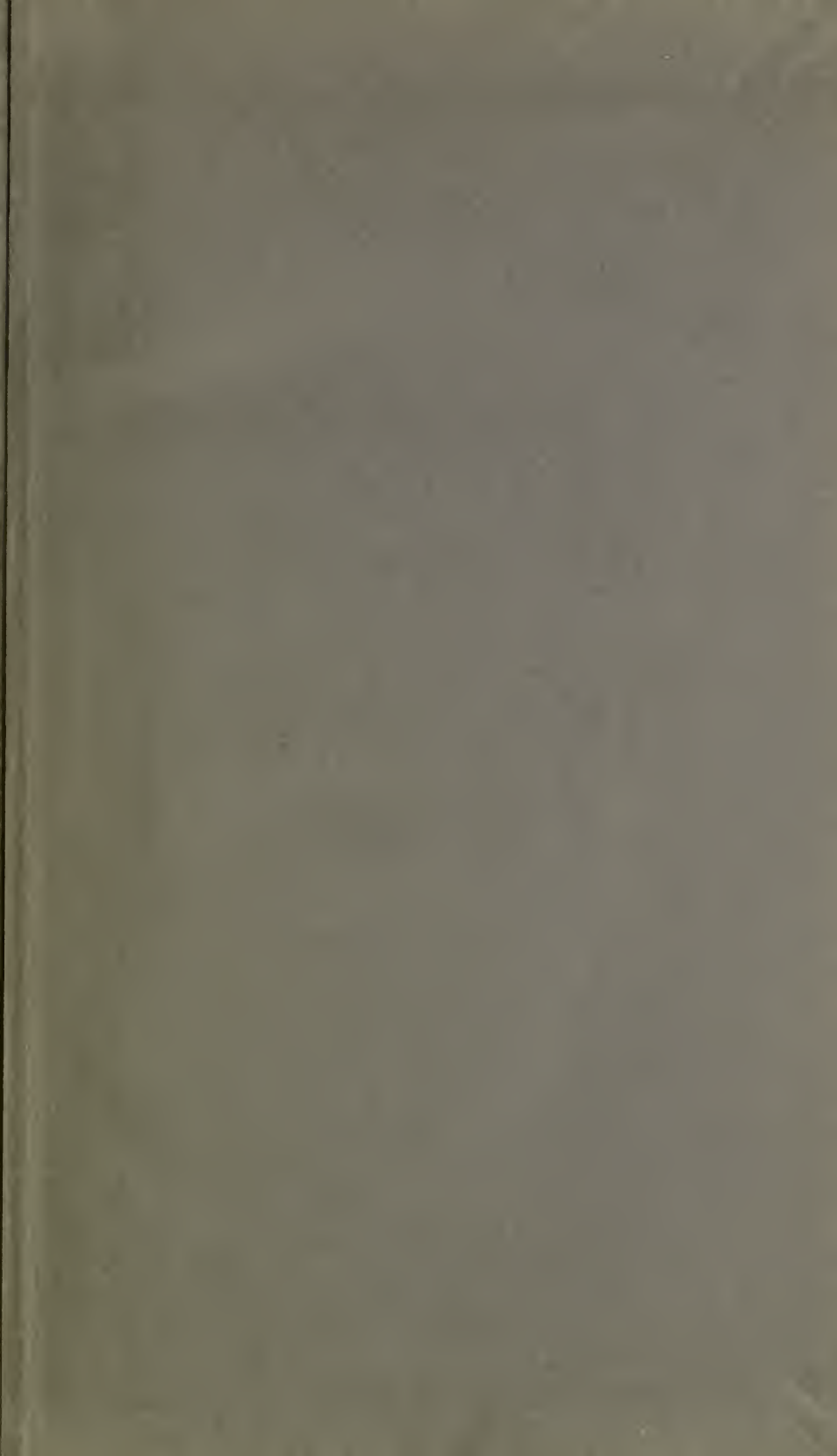
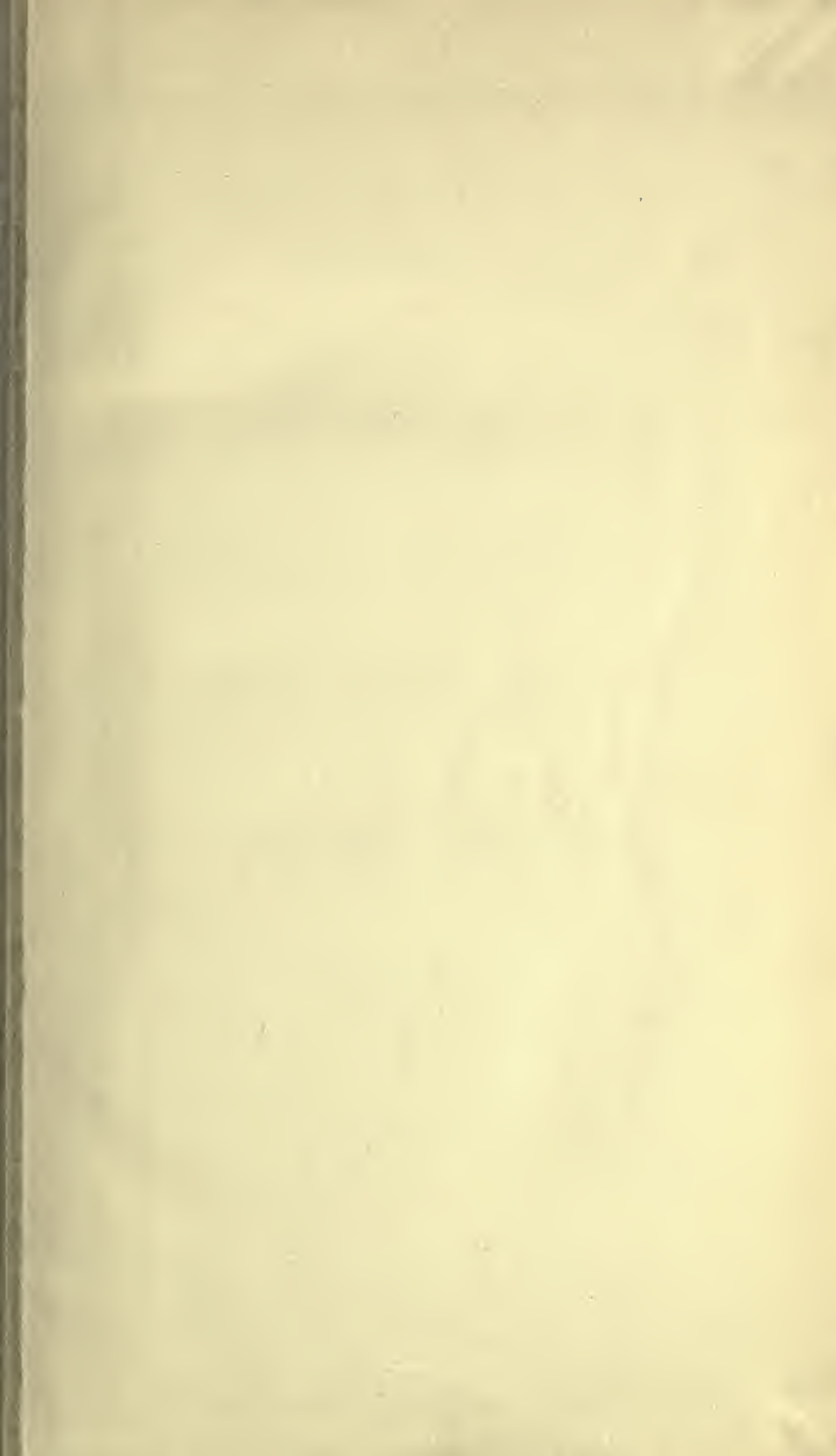


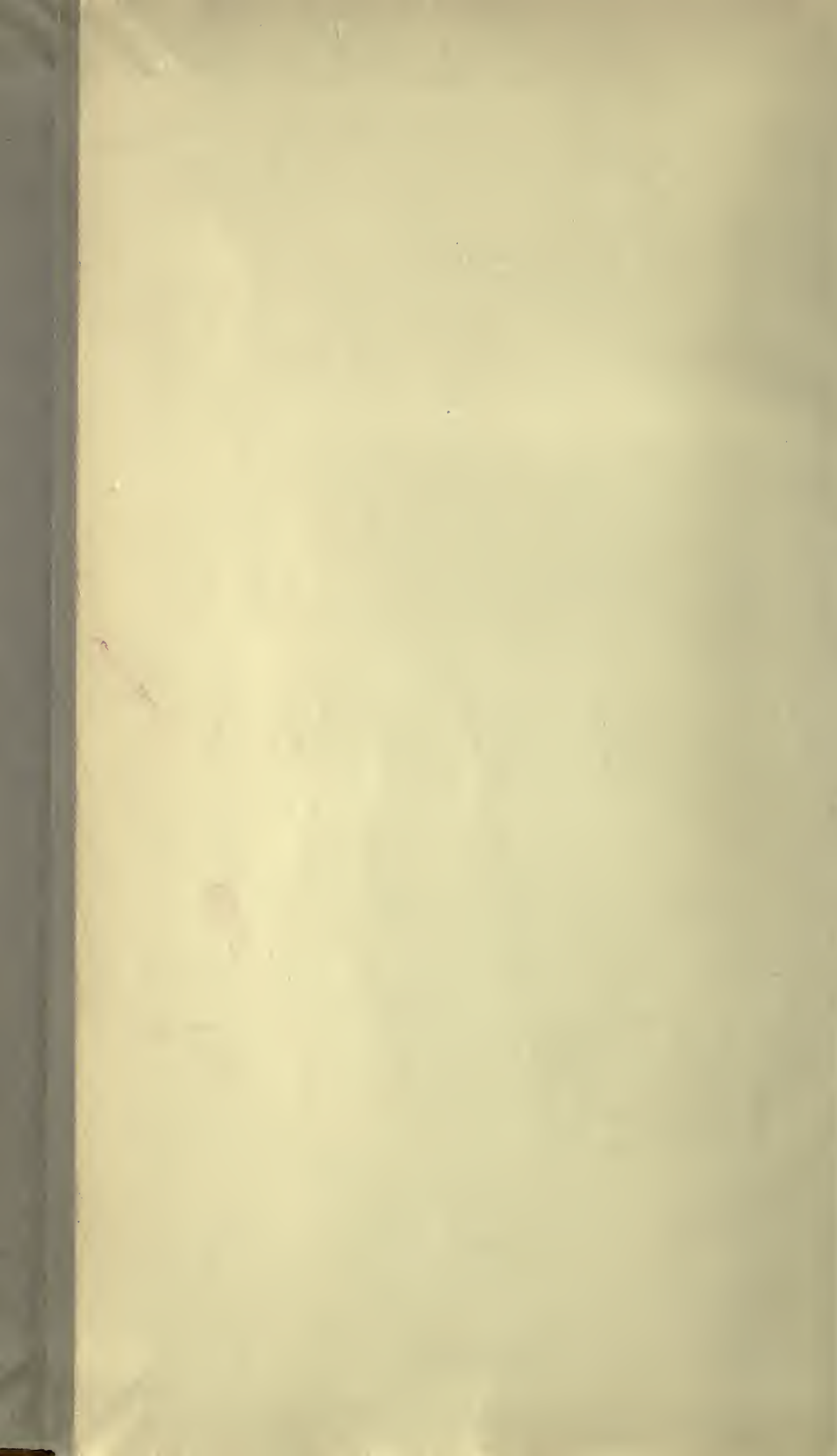
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**COURSE**  
OF  
**POPULAR LECTURES,**

AS DELIVERED BY

**FRANCES WRIGHT,**

IN NEW-YORK, PHILADELPHIA, BALTIMORE, BOSTON, CINCINNATI,  
ST. LOUIS, LOUISVILLE, AND OTHER CITIES, TOWNS, AND  
DISTRICTS OF THE UNITED STATES

WITH

**THREE ADDRESSES,**

ON

**VARIOUS PUBLIC OCCASIONS.**

AND A REPLY TO THE CHARGES AGAINST THE FRENCH  
REFORMERS OF 1789.

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**SECOND EDITION.**

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**NEW-YORK:**

PUBLISHED AT THE OFFICE OF THE FREE ENQUIRER, HALL OF SCIENCE,  
BROOME-STREET.

**1829.**

BD 171  
D3

*Southern District of New-York, ss.*

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TO THE  
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(FREE TO EXAMINE, TO JUDGE, TO ADOPT, OR TO DISCARD THE  
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THEREIN RECOMMENDED,)

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## PREFACE.

THE substance of the three first lectures which appear in the present volume, was first delivered in Cincinnati, during the course of the last summer.

The motives that actuated me to step forward in a manner ill suited to my taste and habits, which are rather those of a quiet observer and reflecting writer, than of a popular reformer or public speaker, will appear sufficiently in the discourses themselves. I may observe, however, that from the age of seventeen, when I first accidentally opened the page of America's national history, as portrayed by the Italian Bocca, the only work on a subject so politically heterodox which had found a place in the aristocratical libraries which surrounded my youth—from that moment my attention became rivetted on this country, as on the theatre where man might first awake to the full knowledge and the full exercise of his powers. I immediately collected every work which promised to throw any light on the institutions, character, and condition of the American people: and as, at that period, little satisfactory information on these subjects could be gleaned in Europe, I visited this country in person. The "Views" then rapidly formed I published on my return to England, with the single object of awakening the attention of European reformers to the great principles laid down in American government. Those principles had indeed so warmed my own feelings, as to have influenced my perceptions. During my first visit to America, I seemed to hear and see her declaration of independence every where. I studied her institutions, and mistook for the energy of enlightened liberty what was, perhaps, rather the restlessness of commercial enterprise. I saw her population active and thriving, and conceived that to be the effect of wise social regulations, which had, perhaps, rather its source in the temporary state of an artificial market. I saw neither princes nor bayonets, nor a church married to the state, and conceived, in very truth, that liberty had here quickened the human mind, until it was prepared to act under the influence of reason instead of fear. It was true that I saw this country at a favourable moment, when peace had opened to her the ports of the world, and set a second seal on her republican liberties and national independence. Still, however favorable the time

might be, my own enthusiasm doubtless conspired to throw a claud-lorraine tint over a country which bore the name of Republic. It required a second visit, and a more minute inspection, to enable me to see things under the sober light of truth, and to estimate both the excellences that are, and those that are yet wanting.

This second visit, while it has exposed to my view evils and abuses differing in degree rather than in nature from those of Europe, has rivetted me in mind and feeling yet more strongly to a country where are enshrined all the liberties and all the hopes of the human race. From a visiter, therefore, I have become a resident and a citizen.

While yet imperfectly acquainted with the state of things in my adopted country—with the breadth of distance between American principles and American practice—between the theory of American government and its actual application—my attention had been attracted towards the political anomaly and moral injustice presented by the condition of the coloured population in the slave-holding states, as well as by the feeling exhibited, and practices legally countenanced, towards that race, generally throughout the union. Four years of extensive and minute observation, with deeper reflection, and more varied, as well as more reasoned experience, have convinced me that American negro slavery is but one form of the same evils which pervade the whole frame of human society. And as, in common with all human errors, it has its source in ignorance, so must one common panacea supply its and their remedy. The spread and increase of knowledge alone can enable man to distinguish that the true interests of each point to the equal liberties, equal duties, and equal enjoyments of all; and that then only, will the principles set forth in the first national instrument of American government, the declaration of independence, be practically exhibited—when the law of force shall give place to the law of reason, when wealth shall be the reward of industry, and all things shall be estimated in a ratio calculated in the order of their utility.

Satisfied that the melioration of the human condition can be reached only by the just informing of the human mind, I have applied such powers as I possess to the furtherance of this pleasing, though laborious task. In the citadel of human error, as exhibited in this country, it is easy to distinguish two main strong



holds, which, if once carried, the fastness would probably surrender at the first summons. These are: First, the neglected state of the female mind, and the consequent dependence of the female condition. This, by placing the most influential half of the nation at the mercy of that worst species of quackery, practised under the name of religion, virtually lays the reins of government, national as well as domestic, in the hands of a priesthood, whose very subsistence depends, of necessity, upon the mental and moral degradation of their fellow creatures.

Second, the ineptness and corruption of the public press, ridden by ascendant influences, until it is abandoned alike by the honest and the wise, and left in the hands of individuals too ignorant to distinguish truth, or too timid to venture its utterance. The former of these evils, as somewhat unusually exhibited last summer in the towns and cities of the western country, first led me to challenge the attention of the American people.

The city of Cincinnati had stood for some time conspicuous for the enterprise and liberal spirit of her citizens, when, last summer, by the sudden combination of the clergy of three orthodox sects, a *revival*, as such scenes of distraction are wont to be styled, was opened in houses, churches, and even on the Ohio river. The victims of this odious experiment on human credulity and nervous weakness, were invariably women. Helpless age was made a public spectacle, innocent youth driven to raving insanity, mothers and daughters carried lifeless from the presence of the ghostly expounders of damnation; all ranks shared the contagion, until the despair of Calvin's hell itself seemed to have fallen upon every heart, and discord to have taken possession of every mansion.

A circumstantial account of the distress and disturbance on the public mind in the Ohio metropolis led me to visit the afflicted city; and, since all were dumb, to take up the cause of insulted reason and outraged humanity.

The consequences of the course of lectures I then first delivered, on three successive Sundays, in the Cincinnati courthouse, and re-delivered in the theatre, were similar to those which have been witnessed elsewhere;—a kindling of wrath among the clergy, a reaction in favor of common sense on the part of their followers, an explosion of public sentiment in favor of liberty, liberality, and instructional reform, and a complete exposure of the

nothingness of the press, which, at a time when the popular mind was engrossed by questions of the first magnitude, sullenly evaded their discussion, betraying alike ignorance the most gross, and servility the most shameless. All that I then observed, conspired to fix me in the determination of devoting my time and labour to the investigation and exposure of existing evils and abuses, and to the gradual developement of the first principles of all moral and physical truth, every where so perplexed and confounded by the sophistry of false learning, the craft of designing knavery, and the blunders of conceited ignorance.

The two means which presented themselves, were those of popular discourses, and a periodical publication, which should follow up the same objects, consistently and fearlessly, and, by instituting enquiry on matters of real interest, aid in drawing off the public attention from the squabbles of party, the verbiage of theory, the gossippings of idleness, and the ravings of zeal without knowledge.

The present volume contains the first, or introductory course, closing at the seventh lecture; in which I have attempted to sketch an outline of the field of truth, and, at the same time, to expose such existing errors as must tend to blind the intellectual sight to its perception.

The second course, which will be found sketched at the close of the fifth lecture, on *Morals*, will attempt the developement and practical application of those simple principles by which the conduct of human beings, one towards the other, may be justly regulated, and the face of human society be harmonized into beauty.

In the seventh discourse, on "*Existing Evils and their Remedy*," I was induced by circumstances, and the impatience of the public mind, somewhat to anticipate a subject whose more complete developement will form an important item in the second course, as laid out at the close of the fifth lecture, already referred to, and to which I shall apply myself so soon as some duties of a more private nature may permit.

In attempting reform by means of instructional improvement at the present day, the laborer is perplexed by the alternate dullness and vivacity, inertness and restlessness of the human mind. At first, curiosity is slow to awaken; then it runs too fast; anon it slumbers, as if all truth were seized, and its every feature dis-



tinguished, when perhaps not a single impression received is in accurate accordance with fact and with reason.

The effects of a pernicious education are in nothing more conspicuous, than in the universal activity of the imagination and the inertness of the judgment. To treat any subject with perspicuity, a certain order and arrangement are indispensable. Let this order be disturbed, and arrangement interrupted, and things the most simple appear confused, and truths the most evident, difficult or doubtful. But to proceed step by step—to trace the outline and consider the details—to substantiate first principles, and then trace them out in their various applications, demands attention too patient, and reflection too dispassionate, for minds habitually unsettled by the day-dreams of fancy, and accustomed to adopt conclusions without examining premises. The first effort of the reformer is to awaken, but soon he finds it yet more necessary to compose. The spur is hardly applied when the rein is wanting, and the impatience of curiosity is soon a greater hinderance to progress than the apathy of ignorance.

All this, however, a little perseverance, sustained by zeal and tempered by prudence, might speedily vanquish, were it not, most unhappily, the momentary interest of a large and encreasing body of men to feed the worst passions of the hour, and to counteract the labors of truth's advocates by every means possible for art to devise or violence to dare. Still, in this country, the progress of the human mind, if impeded, cannot be arrested. And truly, if regard be had to the conflicting interests and sinister influences which now pervade society, we may rather marvel at the success obtained than at the difficulties encountered.

The views which I have felt it my duty to present to the American people—the only people free to choose between truth and error, good and evil—are as yet but faintly sketched. The outline only is presented, and those first principles laid down in whose general and minute application I shall hereafter seek the law of nations and the law of men. While attempting the development of these first principles, I have been often challenged to their premature application to existing laws and usages; not seeing that with these the enquirer after truth has little to do, and that it must be rather for our laws and usages to bend to principles, than for these to shape themselves to our laws and usages. As a lecturer, therefore, I have rather applied myself to develope

what is true than to expose what is false ; reserving my comments on the passing opinions and practices of the age for the pages of the periodical of which I am a joint editor.

The Free Enquirer, formerly the New Harmony Gazette, was the first periodical established in the United States for the purpose of fearless and unbiassed enquiry on all subjects. It was conducted in Indiana, with more or less consistency and ability, for the space of three years, when I assumed its joint proprietorship, and removed it to New-York, under a name more expressive of its character. Since that period, it has been conducted, I am sure, with honesty, and, I hope, not without utility. Its editors have had singly in view the discovery of truth and the well being of man. If their zeal has been warm, their spirit has, I trust, been gentle. If they have spared no error on account of its popularity, they have neither sought the exposure of the erring, nor resented the hostility of the violent. They have kept true to the pledge given in their prospectus—they have sought truth “alone, and for itself;” “they have devoted their pages without fear, without reserves, without pledge to men, parties, sects, or systems, to free, unbiassed and universal enquiry;” and, while taking for their premises the principles developed in the following discourses, they have fested, as they will continue to test, the laws, opinions, and practices of men, by that only standard of truth, supplied by nature herself, and by the powers of the human mind.

FRANCES WRIGHT.

*New-York, 4th October, 1829.*



## INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,

TO THE SECOND COURSE.

[As delivered for the second time in New-York.]

THE circumstances under which I now meet this assemblage of the people of New-York, are, I believe, unparalleled in the history of the world. All nations have had their revolutions—all cities, in the hitherto unfortunate annals of the human race, their disturbances, and their disturbers; but truly, the sight and the sound is alike novel, of privilege and pretension arraying all the forces of a *would-be* hierarchy and a *would-be* aristocracy, to assassinate the liberties of a free state in the person of a single individual, and to outrage public order and public decency, by ribald slanders and incendiary threats, against the reputation and person of a woman. Truly the signs are novel which mark this hour, and truly the place assigned to myself by the clamour and artifice of a body of men, trembling for privileges and profits, and eager to drown with noisy words that which they cannot confute by argument, might cower the strength of one less confident in her cause, or less ardent for its success. But, so surely as I know the strength of the ground which I have assumed, and the weakness of that which *they* have to defend, will I stand fast, and stand firm. And did I need, in this hour, ought beyond or without my own bosom to sustain me, I should find it in my conviction of the destined triumph of the cause I serve, and in the pure decision of wiser and happier generations to come, who (be what it may, the momentary issue of this hour, and its momentary consequences, to me,) shall write my name and preserve my

memory among those of the champions of human liberty and heralds of human improvement.

I know of none, from the modest Socrates and gentle Jesus, down to the least or the greatest reformers of our own time, who have remembered the poor, the ignorant, or the oppressed, raised their voice in favour of more equal distributions of knowledge and liberty, or dared to investigate the causes of vice and wretchedness, with a view to their remedy; I know of none, I say, who have not been the mark of persecution, drank the poison of calumny, or borne the cross of martyrdom. What better and wiser have endured, I shall not lack courage to meet. Having put my hand to the plough, I will not draw back, nor, having met the challenge so long cast at human nature and human reason, alike by privilege and superstition, will I refuse to meet all hazards in their cause.

I have already pledged myself to show evidence for all my opinions; I pledge myself farther, to *show all my opinions*, for, so truly as I have taken man for my study, and his happiness for my object, do I believe that all my opinions can bring facts to their support, and will, sooner or later, find an echo in every thinking mind and feeling heart.

It hath been asked again and again, amid all the confusion of reports and assertions, threats and declamations, conjured up to fright the timidity of woman, and alarm the protecting tenderness of man, why I do not reply to the slander of enemies, and supply arguments to friends?

If among the present assemblage there be any who have followed all or some of my previous discourses, I would put it to their memory and their reason, if I, on those occasions, presented arguments and evidence for the opinions advanced; and if any one of those arguments has been by a single individual refuted, or that evidence, in whole or in part, by one single individual impugned.



And I will here call upon you to observe, that my opponents have had the command of the whole press and all the pulpits of this city. To what account have these been turned? To heap on my name and person outrage and abuse. To libel my audience; intimidate women, attack the interests of men, invoke the interference of the magistracy of the city, and threaten the lessees of this house with "riot, fire, and bloodshed."

My friends, I appeal to your reason, if, by resorting to such measures, my opponents have not substantiated their own weakness, and supplied an acknowledgment, that so far as I have spoken they cannot gainsay me?

And now, then, I will ask, and that rather for the sake of good order and common sense, than for any personal interest of mine; if on the topics I *have* spoken, I have neither outraged your reason nor your feelings, and remain unanswered by my enemies—if it be not at the least probable that on the topics I have *not* spoken, I may be rational also. I have nothing in my head or my heart to hold back from such of my fellow creatures, as may desire to read either, with a view to the eliciting of truth. I have already sketched out to you the subject matter of many future investigations, embracing all our weightiest duties and responsibilities, as reasoning and sentient beings.

But, as I have opened our discussions in order, so *in order* must I pursue them, if pursued at all. We cannot speak to all things at once, nor demonstrate the last problem in Euclid, ere we have substantiated the first.

In compliance with the wishes of a mass of the citizens, as conveyed to me by individuals, and attested by my own observations of the many disappointed of entrance in our former places of meeting, I have consented to redeliver my elementary course on the nature of all knowledge, physical and moral.

Without a thorough understanding of the primary truths which it has been my attempt, in this elementary course, familiarly to elucidate, the public mind must be unfit for any discussion ; therefore it is, that I commence with these primary truths ; and therefore it is, that I shall decline the discussion of all other topics until, our first premises being laid, we are supplied with a standard by which to test all existing opinions and existing practice.

Whenever hereafter I may be called, in peace and with seriousness, to deliver my views on any subject of general interest to my fellow beings, I will meet their wishes. My opinions, whatever they may be, I am not accustomed to *defend*, but I will willingly *explain* ; and explain with that simplicity, which befits enquiry after truth, and that tenderness to the feelings of others, which I think I am not apt to forget.

Before we open our discussions of the evening, I would suggest to the audience, the propriety of bearing in mind the circumstances under which we meet, the former futile attempts to disturb our meetings in the Masonic Hall, and the possible presence of some mistaken and misguided individuals, ready to excite false alarm, and to take advantage of any the least disturbance, with a view to the injury of the cause of human improvement, which we are met to promote, and to the injury of the lessees of the building which we now occupy.

In case of any attempt to disturb our meeting, by cries of alarm, I beg the audience to bear in mind, that the house is under vigilant and double police.

I shall now, then, present you with the opening discourse, formerly delivered in the Masonic Hall. And, as it will be in matter and words the same, you will judge of the accuracy of the reports presented in your daily papers.



## LECTURE I.

---

### ON THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE.

WHO among us, that hath cast even an occasional and slightly observant glance on the face of society, but must have remarked the differing opinions, which distract the human mind; the opposing creeds and systems, each asserting its claim to infallibility, and rallying around its standard pertinacious disciples, enthusiastic proselytes, ardent apologists, fiery combatants, obsequious worshippers, conscientious followers, and devoted martyrs? If we extend our observation over the surface of our globe, and consider its diversified population, however varied in hue and feature, we find it yet more varied in opinions, in one opinion only invariably agreed, viz. that of its infallibility. The worshipper of sculptured idols bows before the image of his hand, and shrinks with unfeigned terror, if a sacrilegious intruder profane the sanctuary of his superstition. The adorer of the bright luminary which marks our days and seasons, sees in the resplendent orb, not a link in the vast chain of material existence, but the source of all existence; and so from the most unpretending savage, to the most lettered nation of a lettered age, we find *all* shaping their superstitions, according to the measure of their ignorance or their knowledge, and each devoutly believing his faith and practice to be the true and the just. Or let us confine our observation within the limits of the country we inhabit—how varying the creeds arising out of one system

of faith! How contradictory the assertions and expectations of sects, all equally positive and equally, we may presume, conscientious! How conflicting the opinions and feelings of men upon all subjects, trivial or important! until we are tempted to exclaim, "Where, then, is right or wrong but in human imagination, and what is truth more than blind opinion?" Few of us prone to study or observation, yet educated after existing methods, but must have asked these questions, and halted for a reply.

Should the problem here started be, I say not impossible, but even difficult of solution, lamentable must be the human condition to the end of time! Had truth no test—no standard—no positive, no tangible existence, behold us, then, sold to error, and, while to error, to misery, through all the generations of our race! But, fortunately, the answer is simple; only too simple, it would appear, for mystery loving, mystery seeking man, to perceive and acknowledge.

Let not the present audience imagine, that I am about to add one more to the already uncountable, unnameable systems, which distract the understandings of men, or to draw yet new doctrines and precepts from the fertile alembic of the human brain. I request you to behold in me an enquirer, not a teacher; one who conceives of truth as a jewel to be found, not to be coined; a treasure to be discovered by observation, and accumulated by careful, persevering industry, not invented and manufactured by learned art or aspiring quackery, like the once fashionable elixir of immortality and philosopher's stone. My object will be simply to take with you a survey of the field of human enquiry; to ascertain its nature, its extent, its boundaries, its limits; to discover, in the first place, what there is for us to know; secondly, the means we possess for acquiring such knowledge as is of possible attainment,

and, thirdly, having satisfied ourselves as to what can be known, and as to what we know, to seek in our knowledge the test of our opinions.

It must be admitted, that, as all our opinions must rest upon some evidence, real or imagined, so upon the truth or falsehood of the evidence admitted, must rest the truth or falsehood of the opinions based thereupon. It is evident, therefore, that before we can apply any safe or certain test to our opinions, we must well understand the nature of true evidence; before we can reflect, we must have something to reflect upon; before we can think accurately respecting any thing, we must know accurately all relating to it; and wheresoever our knowledge be complete, will our opinion be just.

Seeing, then, that just opinions are the result of just knowledge, and perceiving, as we must all perceive, how much confusion arises to society out of the conflicting opinions, which divide alike nations and families, into sects and parties, it is equally our interest and our duty, to aim at the acquisition of just knowledge, with a view to the formation of just opinions. And, as we shall hereafter have occasion to observe, just practice being the result of just opinions, and human happiness being the certain result of just practice, it is equally our interest and our duty to aim at the formation of just opinions, with a view to the attainment of happiness.

We shall, therefore, open our investigations by an enquiry into the nature and object of just knowledge; and if we succeed in ascertaining these, we will farther examine the causes which at present impede our progress, and the means best calculated at once to remove such impediments, and to advance us in the course which it is our interest to pursue.

If we consider man in comparison with other animals,



a view to convenient and suitable divisions in the great work of inspecting the whole, and also with a view to the applying more order and method in the arrangement of the facts collated in the wide field of nature, they have been classed under different heads, each of which we may call *a branch of knowledge*, or, more succinctly, *a science*.

Thus : do we consider the various living tribes which people the elements? We class our observations under the head of natural history. Do we direct our attention to the structure and mechanism of their bodies? We designate the results of our inspection under the heads anatomy and physiology. Do we trace the order of occurrences and appearances in the wide field of nature? We note them under natural philosophy. Do we analyze substances and search out their simple elements? chemistry. Do we apply ourselves to the measurement of bodies, or calculate the heights and distances of objects? geometry. And so on, through all the range of human observation, extending from the relative position of the heavenly bodies, and accurate calculation of their courses, to the uses, habits, structure, and physiology of the delicate plant which carpets our earth.

Now, all the sciences, properly so called, being compounded of facts, ascertained or ascertainable by the sensations of each individual, so all that is not so ascertainable is not knowledge, only belief, and can never constitute for us matter of fact certainty, only greater or less probability. In elucidation, we might remark that the facts we glean, in the study of chemistry, supply us with knowledge; those received upon testimony, as in the study of history, supply us with probabilities, or with improbabilities, as it may be, and constitute belief.

Now, again—as our knowledge is supplied by our own individual sensations, and our belief by the attested sensa-

tions of others, it is possible, while pretending to communicate knowledge, only to communicate belief. This we know to be the system pursued in all our schools and colleges, where the truths of the most demonstrable sciences are presented under the disguise of oral or written lessons, instead of being exposed, in practical illustrations, to the eye, and the ear, and the touch, in the simple, incontrovertible fact. This method, while it tends to hide and perpetuate the errors of teachers, so does it also inculcate credulity and blind belief in the scholar, and finally establishes the conclusion in the mind, that knowledge is compounded of words, and signs, and intellectual abstractions, instead of facts and human sensations.

Greatly, very greatly to be desired, is a just mode of instruction. It would not only shorten the road of knowledge, it would carpet it with flowers. We should then tread it in childhood with smiles of cheerfulness; and, as we followed its pleasant course, horizon after horizon would open upon us, delighting and improving our minds and feelings, through life, unto our latest hour. But if it is of the first importance to be launched aright in infancy, the moment we distinctly perceive what knowledge is, we may, at any age, start boldly for its attainment.

I have said, we may start *boldly*—ay! and there lies the surety of our success. If we bring not the good courage of minds covetous of truth, and truth only, prepared to hear all things, examine all things, and decide upon all things, according to evidence, we should do more wisely to sit down contented in ignorance, than to bestir ourselves only to reap disappointment. But let us once look around upon this fair material world, as upon the book which it behoves us to read; let us understand, that in this book there are no puzzling mysteries, but a simple train of occurrences, which it imports us to observe, with an endless

of an intimate acquaintance with all the most esteemed branches of knowledge, he may be utterly unacquainted with the object and nature of knowledge itself. Let us, then, enquire again, *what knowledge is*.

Is it not, in the first place, acquaintance with ourselves? and secondly, with all things to which we stand in relation?

How are we to obtain this acquaintance? By observation and patient enquiry.

What are the means we possess for this observation and enquiry? Our senses; and our faculties, as awakened and improved in and by the exercise of our senses.

Let us now examine what are the objects really submitted to the investigation of our senses.

These may be all embraced under the generic term matter, implying the whole of existence within the range of our inspection.

Were we to proceed minutely in our analysis, we should observe that matter, as existing around us, appears under three forms, the gaseous, the liquid, and the solid; and that under one or other of these forms may be accurately classed all that is submitted to our observation—all, in short, that we can see, hear, feel, taste, or smell. But to enter at present into such details would be foreign to our purpose.

I shall, therefore, pass on to observe, that the accurate and patient investigation of matter, in all its subdivisions, together with all its qualities and changes, constitutes a just education. And that in proportion as we ascertain, in the course of investigation, the real qualities and actual changes of matter, together with the judicious application of all things to the use of man, and influence of all occurrences on the happiness of man, so do we acquire knowledge. In other words, knowledge is an accumulation of facts, and signifies *things known*. In proportion, there-



fore, as the sphere of our observation is large, and our investigation of all within that sphere careful, in proportion is our knowledge.

The view of knowledge we have here taken is simple ; and it may be observed, that not in this case only, but in all others, accuracy and simplicity go hand in hand. All truth is simple, for truth is only fact. The means of attaining truth are equally simple. We have but to seek and we shall find ; to open our eyes and our ears ; without prejudice to observe ; without fear to listen, and dispassionately to examine, compare, and draw our conclusions.

The field of knowledge is around, and about, and within us. Let us not be alarmed by sounding words, and let us not be *deceived* by them. Let us look to things. It is things which we have to consider. Words are, or, more correctly, should be, only the signs of things. I say they *should be* ; for it is a most lamentable truth, that they are now very generally conceived to constitute the very substance of knowledge. Words, indeed, should seem at present contrived rather for the purpose of confusing our ideas, than administering to their distinctness and arrangement. Instead of viewing them as the shadows, we mistake them for the substance ; and conceive that in proportion as we enlarge our vocabulary, we multiply our acquirements.

Vain, then, will be the attempt to increase our knowledge, until we understand where we are to look for it, and in what it consists. Here is the first stepping stone. Let our foot but firmly strike it, and our after progress is easy.

And in what lies the importance of this first step in human knowledge ? In the accuracy which it brings to all our ideas. It places us at once on firm ground, introduces us into the field of real enquiry, and lays the reign of the imagination in the hand of the judgment. Difficult were

it to exaggerate the importance of the step which involves such consequences. Until we bring accuracy to our thoughts, and, we may add, accuracy to the words employed for their expression—we can make no progress. We may wander, indeed, and most certainly shall wander, in various paths; but they will be paths of error. The straight broad road of improvement it will not be ours to tread, until we take heed unto our feet, and know always whither we are going.

Imagine—and how easy is it to imagine, when we have but to look around us or within ourselves—imagine the confusion of hopes, desires, ambitions, and expectations, with which the scholar enters, and but too often leaves, the halls of science. On entering them, he conceives that some mysterious veil, like the screen of the holy of holies, is about to be withdrawn, and that he is to look at things far removed from real life, and raised far above the vulgar apprehension. On leaving them, he has his memory surcharged with a confusion of ideas, and a yet worse confusion of words. He knows, perhaps, the properties of ciphers and of angles; the names and classification of birds, fishes, quadrupeds, insects, and minerals; the chemical affinities of bodies; can measure star from star; analyse invisible substances; detail in chronological order the rise and fall of nations, with their arts, sciences, and sects of philosophy. He can do all this, and more; and yet, perhaps, is there neither arrangement in his knowledge, distinctness in his ideas, nor accuracy in his language. And, while possessed of many valuable facts, there is blended with all and with each, a thousand illusions. Thus it is that so many wordy pedants, and hare-brained or shallow disputants, are sent forth from the schools of all countries, while those who do honour to their species, by rendering service in their generation, are,



most generally, what is called self-taught. And the reason of this is evident. Our existing modes of education, being equally false and deficient, and the instruction of our schools full of fallacies, theories, and hypotheses, the more regularly a youth is trained in fashionable learning, the more confused is usually his perception of things, and the more prostrated his reason by the dogmatism of teachers, the sophism of words, and the false principles engrafted by means of pretended science, ostentatiously inculcated, or real science, erroneously imparted. While, on the other hand, a vigorous intellect, if stimulated by fortunate circumstances to enquiry, and left to accumulate information by the efforts of its own industry, though its early progress may be slow, and its aberrations numerous, yet in the free exercise of its powers, is more likely to collect accurate knowledge, than those who are methodically fed with learned error and learnedly disguised truth.

I shall have occasion, in a more advanced stage of our enquiries, to examine minutely the errors in the existing mode of instruction, and which are of a nature to perplex the human mind from infancy to age, and to make even learning an additional stumbling block in the way of knowledge. For the present, I would confine myself to the establishing the simple position, that *all real knowledge is derived from positive sensations.*

In proportion to the number of senses we bring to bear upon an object, is the degree of our acquaintance with that object. Whatever we see, and feel, and attentively examine with *all* our senses, we *know*; and respecting the things thus investigated, we can afterwards form a correct opinion. Wherever, respecting such things, our opinions are erroneous, it is where our investigation of them has been insufficient, or our recollection of them imperfect;

and the only certain way of rectifying the error, is to refer again to the object itself.

Things which we have not ourselves examined, and occurrences which we have not ourselves witnessed, but which we receive on the attested sensations of others, we may *believe*, but we do not *know*. Now, as these two modes of intellectual assent are generally, if not universally, confounded; and, as their accurate distinction is, in its consequences, of immense importance, I shall risk the straining of your attention for a few minutes, while I attempt its elucidation.

To select a familiar, and at the moment a pertinent example. The present audience *know* that an individual is now addressing them, because they see her person, and hear her voice. They may *believe* that some other speaker occupies the pulpit of a church in this town, if assured to that effect by a person of ordinary veracity; but, let the testimony of that person be as well substantiated in their opinion as possible, the fact received through his reported sensations, they would *believe*; the fact of my presence, admitted upon their own sensations, they will *know*.

My hearers will understand that my object in presenting these definitions, is not to draw a mere verbal distinction, but a distinction between different states of the human mind; the distinction in words only being important, in that it is necessary to a clear understanding of the mental phenomena it is desirable to illustrate.

Did the limits of our present discourse permit such a developement, or did I not apprehend to weary the attention, it would not be difficult to draw the line between knowledge and belief, and again between the different grades of belief, through all the varieties of intellectual assent from the matter of fact certainty supplied by



knowledge, down to the lowest stage of probability, supplied by belief. But having suggested the distinction, I must leave you to draw it for yourselves; requesting you only to observe—that, as your own positive sensations can alone give you knowledge of a thing, so is your belief of any thing stronger, in proportion as you can more accurately establish, or approach nearer to, the sensations of those whose testimony you receive.

Thus: if a friend, or, more particularly, if several friends, of tried veracity and approved judgment, relate to us a circumstance of which they declare themselves to have been attentive spectators—our belief is of the highest kind. If they relate a circumstance which they shall have received from another, or from other individuals, for whose veracity and judgment they also vouch, our belief, though in a measure accorded, is very considerably weakened; and so on, until, after a few more removes from the original sensations of the reported spectators, our belief is reduced to zero.

But farther, it is here of importance to observe that belief—that is, the belief of a well trained mind—can never be accorded to the attested sensations of others, should those attested sensations be contradicted by our own well established experience, or by the unvarying and agreeing experience of mankind. Thus: should one, or twenty, or a thousand individuals, swear to the fact of having seen a man, by effort of his unaided volition, raise himself through the air to the top of a steeple in this city, we should believe—what? Not the eccentric occurrence, however attested, but one of two very common occurrences—either that the individuals were seeking to impose upon us, or that their own ignorant credulity had been deceived by false appearances.

But now let us suppose a case, very likely to be pre-

sented in form of an objection, although in reality capable of furnishing a forcible elucidation of the simple truth we are now attempting to illustrate. Let us suppose that some of our organs should become diseased—those of sight, for instance; and that we should, in consequence, imagine the appearance of an object, not perceptible to more healthy individuals. If the phantasy presented nothing uncommon in any of its parts, or inconsistent with the course of our previous sensations, we should at first, undoubtedly, yield credence to our eyes; until, in consequence, perhaps, of some incongruity, we should be led to appeal to our other senses, when, if they did not concur with the testimony of our vision, we should distinguish the appearance, immediately, for the effect of disease, and apply ourselves, on the instant, to its investigation and remedy.

But again, let us suppose (a case by no means uncommon in the history of human pathology) that two of our senses should be diseased—our sight and our hearing; and that we should in consequence see the spectral illusion of a human being; and, farther, imagine such illusion to discourse with us. Our belief would be now strongly accorded to this two-fold evidence; but we should still have a resource in our sense of touch. Should this last not confirm the evidence supplied by our vision and our hearing, we should suspect, as in the former case, the health of our organs, and consult on the subject with an able physician.

But now let us suppose that *all* the organs of sense, in some individual, should become suddenly diseased, and sight, hearing, feeling, taste, and smell, should *combine* to cheat him into the belief of existences not perceptible to the more healthy sensations of his fellow creatures. I do not conceive that such an individual, however naturally strong or highly cultivated his judgment, and even



supposing his judgment to retain its activity in the midst of the general disorder, could for any length of time struggle with the delusion, but must gradually yield intellectual assent to his diseased sensations, however incongruous these might be, or however at variance with past experience. I conceive that an individual thus diseased in all his organs of sense, must rapidly lose all control over his reasoning faculties, and present, consequently, to his fellow creatures, the afflicting spectacle of one labouring under mental insanity.

If we look to the unfortunate maniac, or to the sufferer tossing in fever delirium, we shall perceive how implicit the credence given to his diseased sensations. The phantoms which he hears, and feels, and sees, are all realities to him, and, as realities, govern his thoughts and decide his actions. How, in such cases, does the enlightened physician proceed? He does not argue with the incongruous ideas of his patient; he examines his disordered frame, and as he can restore healthy action to all its parts, so does he hope to restore healthy sensations to the body, and accurate ideas to the mind. Here, then, we see, in sickness as in health, our sensations supplying us with all our intellectual food. In fever, they supply us with dreams; in health, if accurately studied, with knowledge.

The object of these observations is to show, that as we can only *know* a thing by its immediate contact with our senses, so is *all knowledge compounded of the accurately observed, accumulated, and agreeing sensations of mankind.*

The field of knowledge, then, we have observed to be the field of nature, or of material existence around and within us. The number of objects comprised within the circle of human observation, is so multiplied, and the properties or qualities of these objects so diversified, that with



a view to convenient and suitable divisions in the great work of inspecting the whole, and also with a view to the applying more order and method in the arrangement of the facts collated in the wide field of nature, they have been classed under different heads, each of which we may call a *branch of knowledge*, or, more succinctly, a *science*.

Thus: do we consider the various living tribes which people the elements? We class our observations under the head of natural history. Do we direct our attention to the structure and mechanism of their bodies? We designate the results of our inspection under the heads anatomy and physiology. Do we trace the order of occurrences and appearances in the wide field of nature? We note them under natural philosophy. Do we analyze substances and search out their simple elements? chemistry. Do we apply ourselves to the measurement of bodies, or calculate the heights and distances of objects? geometry. And so on, through all the range of human observation, extending from the relative position of the heavenly bodies, and accurate calculation of their courses, to the uses, habits, structure, and physiology of the delicate plant which carpets our earth.

Now, all the sciences, properly so called, being compounded of facts, ascertained or ascertainable by the sensations of each individual, so all that is not so ascertainable is not knowledge, only belief, and can never constitute for us matter of fact certainty, only greater or less probability. In elucidation, we might remark that the facts we glean, in the study of chemistry, supply us with knowledge; those received upon testimony, as in the study of history, supply us with probabilities, or with improbabilities, as it may be, and constitute belief.

Now, again—as our knowledge is supplied by our own individual sensations, and our belief by the attested sensa-

tions of others, it is possible, while pretending to communicate knowledge, only to communicate belief. This we know to be the system pursued in all our schools and colleges, where the truths of the most demonstrable sciences are presented under the disguise of oral or written lessons, instead of being exposed, in practical illustrations, to the eye, and the ear, and the touch, in the simple, incontrovertible fact. This method, while it tends to hide and perpetuate the errors of teachers, so does it also inculcate credulity and blind belief in the scholar, and finally establishes the conclusion in the mind, that knowledge is compounded of words, and signs, and intellectual abstractions, instead of facts and human sensations.

Greatly, very greatly to be desired, is a just mode of instruction. It would not only shorten the road of knowledge, it would carpet it with flowers. We should then tread it in childhood with smiles of cheerfulness; and, as we followed its pleasant course, horizon after horizon would open upon us, delighting and improving our minds and feelings, through life, unto our latest hour. But if it is of the first importance to be launched aright in infancy, the moment we distinctly perceive what knowledge is, we may, at any age, start boldly for its attainment.

I have said, we may start *boldly*—ay! and there lies the surety of our success. If we bring not the good courage of minds covetous of truth, and truth only, prepared to hear all things, examine all things, and decide upon all things, according to evidence, we should do more wisely to sit down contented in ignorance, than to bestir ourselves only to reap disappointment. But let us once look around upon this fair material world, as upon the book which it behoves us to read; let us understand, that in this book there are no puzzling mysteries, but a simple train of occurrences, which it imports us to observe, with an *endless*

variety of substances and existences, which it imports us to study—what is there, then, to frighten us? what is there not, rather, to encourage our advance?

Yet how far are we from this simple perception of simple things! how far from that mental composure which can alone fit us for enquiry! How prone are we to come to the consideration of every question with heads and hearts pre-occupied! how prone to shrink from any opinion, however reasonable, if it be opposed to any, however unreasonable, of our own! How disposed are we to judge, in anger, those who call upon us to think, and encourage us to enquire! To question our prejudices seems nothing less than sacrilege; to break the chains of our ignorance, nothing short of impiety!

Perhaps at this moment, she who speaks is outraging a prejudice—(shall I be forgiven the word?) Perhaps, among those who hear me, there are who deem it both a presumption and an impropriety for a woman to reason with her fellow creatures.

Did I know, of a surety, this prejudice to prevail among my hearers, I should, indeed, be disposed to reason with *them*. I should be tempted to ask, whether truth had any sex: and I should venture farther to ask, whether they count for nothing, for something, or for every thing, the influence of women over the destinies of our race.

Shall I be forgiven for adverting, most unwillingly, to myself? Having assumed an unusual place, I feel, that to my audience some explanation is due.

Stimulated in my early youth, by I know not what of pitying sympathy with human suffering, and by I know not what persuasion, that our race was not of necessity, born to ignorance, and its companion, vice, but that it possessed faculties and qualities which pointed to virtue and enjoyment; stimulated, at once, by this pity for the actual



condition of man, and this hope of a possible melioration, I applied myself to the discovery of the causes of the one, and of the means for effecting the other.

I have as little the inclination to obtrude on you the process of investigation and course of observation I followed through the period of an eventful youth, as you would probably have to listen to them. Suffice it, that I have been led to consider the growth of knowledge, and the equal distribution of knowledge, as the best—may I say, the only means for reforming the condition of mankind. Shall I be accused of presumption for imagining that I could be instrumental in promoting this, as it appears to me, good work? Shall I appear additionally presumptuous for believing that my sex and my situation tend rather to qualify than to incapacitate me for the undertaking?

So long as the mental and moral instruction of man is left solely in the hands of hired servants of the public—let them be teachers of religion, professors of colleges, authors of books, or editors of journals or periodical publications, dependent upon their literary labours for their daily bread, so long shall we hear but half the truth; and well if we hear so much. Our teachers, political, scientific, moral, or religious; our writers, grave or gay, are *compelled* to administer to our prejudices and to perpetuate our ignorance. They dare not speak that which, by endangering their popularity, would endanger their fortunes. They have to discover not what is true, but what is palatable; not what will search into the hearts and minds of their hearers, but what will open their purse strings. They have to weigh every sentiment before they hazard it, every word before they pronounce it, lest they wound some cherished vanity or aim at some favorite vice. A familiar instance will bring this home to an American audience.

I have been led to inspect, far and wide, the extensive and beautiful section of this country which is afflicted with slavery. I have heard in the cities, villages, and forests of this afflicted region, religious shepherds of all persuasions haranguing their flocks; and I have never heard *one* bold enough to comment on the evil which saps the industry, vitiates the morals, and threatens the tranquillity of the country. The reason of this forbearance is evident. The master of the slave is he who pays the preacher, and the preacher must not irritate his paymaster. I would not here be understood to express the opinion, that the preaching of religious teachers against slavery would be desirable. I am convinced of the contrary—convinced that it would be of direful mischief to both parties, the oppressor and the oppressed. To judge from the tone but too generally employed by religious writers in the northern states, where (as denunciation against the vice of the south risks no patronage and wins cheap credit for humanity) negro philanthropy is not so scarce—to judge, I say, from the tone employed by northern religionists, when speaking of their southern neighbours, and their national crime and affliction, one must suppose them as little capable of counselling foreign as home offenders—as little capable of advising in wisdom as of judging in mercy or speaking with gentleness. The harshest physician with which I am acquainted is the religious physician. Instead of soothing, he irritates; instead of convincing, he disgusts; instead of weighing circumstances, tracing causes, allowing for the bias of early example, the constraining force of implanted prejudice, the absence of every judicious stimulus, and the presence of every bad one; he arraigns, tries, convicts, condemns—himself accuser, jury, judge, and executioner; nobly immolating interests which are not his, generously commanding sacrifices which he has not to

share, indignantly anathematizing crimes which he cannot commit, and virtuously kindling the fires of hell to consume sinners, to whose sins, as he is without temptation, so *for* whose sins he is without sympathy. I would not be understood, therefore, as regretting in this matter the supineness of the southern clergy; I would only point it out to you, desirous that you should observe how well the tribe of Levi know when and where to smite, and when and where to spare!

And though I have quoted an instance more peculiarly familiar to Americans, every country teems with similar examples. The master vice, wherever or whatever it be, is never touched. In licentious aristocracies, or to look no farther than the towns and cities of these states, the rich and pampered few are ever spared, or so gently dealt with, as rather agreeably to tickle the ear, than to probe the conscience, while the crimes of the greatly tempted, greatly suffering poor, are visited with unrelenting rigor.

Is any discovery made in science, tending to open to us farther the book of knowledge, and to purge our minds of superstitious beliefs in occult causes and unsubstantiated creeds—where has it ever found opposers—or, might we not say, persecutors? Even among our hired preachers and licensed teachers of old doctrines and old ways. Is any enquiry instituted into the truth of received opinions and the advantage of existing practice—who are the last to encourage it? nay, the foremost to cry out “heresy!” and stop the mouth of knowledge? Who but those who live by the ignorance of the age, and the intolerance of the hour? Is any improvement suggested in our social arrangements, calculated to equalize property, labour, instruction, and enjoyment; to destroy crime by removing provocation; vice, by removing ignorance; and to build up virtue in the human breast by exchanging the spirit of



self abasement for that of self respect—who are the foremost to treat the suggestions as visionary, the reform as impossible? Even they who live by the fears and the vices of their fellow creatures; and who obtain their subsistence on earth by opening and shutting the door of heaven.

Nor, as we have seen, are our licensed and pensioned teachers the only individuals interested in disguising the truth. All who write for the public market, all who plead in our courts of law, all who harangue in our halls of legislature, all who are, or who aspire to be, popular servants or popular teachers of the people, all are *compelled* to the support of existing opinions, whether right or wrong—all, more or less, do, and, more or less, must, pander to the weaknesses, vices, and prejudices of the public, who pays them with money or applause.

I have said not only that they do, but that they *must*; and most assuredly they must conciliate the popular feeling, or forego the popular favour. Here is intended no satire upon any individuals, professions, nor employments. The object is merely to expose a fact, but a fact highly important to be known; that as, to be popular, men must not speak truths, so, when we would hear truths, we must seek them from other mouths and other pens than those which are dependent upon popular patronage, or which are ambitious of popular admiration.

And here, then, is the cause why I have presumed to reason with my fellow creatures; why, in my earliest years, I devoted myself to the study of their condition, past and present; why I searched into their powers and their capabilities, examined their practice, and weighed their opinions; and why, when I found these both wanting, I volunteered to declare it. I believe that I see some truths important for my fellow beings to know; I feel that I have the courage and the independence to speak that

which I believe ; and where is the friend to his species that will not say, "*Happy, most happy shall it be for human kind, when all independent individuals, male or female, citizens or foreigners, shall feel the debt of kindness they owe to their fellow beings, and fearlessly step forth to reveal unbought truths and hazard unpopular opinions.*"

Until this be done, and done ably, fearlessly, and frequently, the reign of human error must continue ; and, with human error, human vice, and human suffering. The advocates of just knowledge must be armed with courage to dare all things, and to bear all things ; for the truths they revere ; and to seek ; as they may only find, the reward of their exertions in the impression, great or little, slow or rapid, as it may be, which their exertions may produce on public opinion, and, through the public opinion, on the public practice.

We have now sufficiently considered, so far as I have found possible in a single discourse on so wide a topic, the main subject of our introductory enquiries : viz. the nature and object of just knowledge. We have examined, also, some of the errors vulgarly entertained on the subject, and many of the impediments which now obstruct our advances in the road of improvement. We have seen that just knowledge is easy of acquirement, but that few are interested in revealing its simple principles ; while many are driven by circumstances to interpret or dissemble them. We have remarked that, to accelerate the progress of our race, two means present themselves ; a just system of education, and a fearless spirit of enquiry ; and that while the former would remove all difficulties from the path of future generations, the latter would place far in advance even the present. We have also observed on the advantage which would accrue to mankind, if all inde-

pendent individuals would volunteer the task, for which appointed teachers and professional men are now but too frequently unfit, by devoting themselves to the promulgation of truth, without regard to fashionable prejudice. I have been led, also, incidentally to advert to the influence exerted over the fortunes of our race by those who are too often overlooked in our social arrangements and in our civil rights—I allude to women.

Leaving to a future opportunity the more complete developement of the important subject, we have this evening approached—the nature of all knowledge—as well as the equally important subject of youthful education, I shall, at our next meeting, consider the other two enumerated means of improvement, viz. by free enquiry. And as this is for us of the present generation the *only* means, so shall I endeavour to show how much it is our interest, and how imperiously it is our duty, to improve it to the uttermost.

It is with delight that I have distinguished, at each successive meeting, the increasing ranks of my own sex. Were the vital principle of human equality universally acknowledged, it would be to my fellow beings without regard to nation, class, sect, or sex, that I should delight to address myself. But until equality prevail in condition, opportunity, and instruction, it is every where to the least favored in these advantages, that I most especially and anxiously incline.

Nor is the ignorance of our sex matter of surprise, when efforts, as violent as unrelaxed, are every where made for its continuance.

It is not as of yore. Eve puts not forth her hand to gather the fair fruit of knowledge. The wily serpent now hath better learned his lesson; and, to secure his reign in the garden, beguileth her *not* to eat. Promises, entreaties, threats, tales of wonder, and, alas! tales of horror,



are all poured in her tender ears. Above, her agitated fancy hears the voice of a god in thunders; below, she sees the yawning pit; and, before, behind, around, a thousand phantoms, conjured from the prolific brain of insatiate priestcraft, confound, alarm, and overwhelm her reason!

Oh! were that worst evil withdrawn which now weighs upon our race, how rapid were its progress in knowledge! Oh! were men—and, yet more, women, absolved from fear, how easily and speedily and gloriously would they hold on their course in improvement! The difficulty is not to convince, it is to *win attention*. Could truth only be heard, the conversion of the ignorant were easy. And well do the hired supporters of error understand this fact. Well do they *know*, that if the daughters of the present, and mothers of the future generation, were to drink of the living waters of knowledge, their reign would be ended—"their occupation gone." So well do they know it, that, far from obeying to the letter the command of their spiritual leader, "Be ye fishers of men," we find them every where *fishers of women*. Their own sex, old and young, they see with indifference swim by their nets; but closely and warily are their meshes laid, to entangle the female of every age.

Fathers and husbands! do ye not also understand this fact? Do ye not see how, in the mental bondage of your wives and fair companions, ye yourselves are bound? Will ye fondly sport yourselves in your imagined liberty, and say, "it matters not if our women be mental slaves?" Will ye pleasure yourselves in the varied paths of knowledge, and imagine that women, hoodwinked and unawakened, will make the better servants and the easier playthings? They are greatly in error who so strike the account; as many a bankrupt merchant and sinking mechanic, not to say drowning capitalist, could bear witness.

But, setting aside dollars and cents, which men, in their present uncomfortable state of existence, are but too prone exclusively to regard, how many nobler interests of the mind and the heart cry "treason!" to this false calculation?

At our next meeting, we shall consider these interests, which will naturally present themselves during our investigations on the subject of free enquiry. In what just knowledge consists we have cursorily examined; to put ourselves in the way of attaining that knowledge, be our next object.



## LECTURE II.

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### OF FREE ENQUIRY CONSIDERED AS A MEANS FOR OBTAINING JUST KNOWLEDGE.

THE subject we have to examine this evening, is that of free enquiry, considered as a means for the attainment of just knowledge.

At our last meeting, we endeavoured to investigate the nature and object of just knowledge, together with the means proper for its attainment. We discovered these means to be two; a judicious education, and a free spirit of enquiry.

From the first and best means, a judicious education, we of the present generation are unfortunately excluded. Wherever our lot may have been cast, or whatever may be our attainments, we must all be conscious that we are what we are in spite of many disadvantages; and that, however wise or good our vanity may pronounce us to be, we should have been much wiser, and, consequently, better and happier, had a judicious education more carefully developed our tender faculties, and brought order and accuracy to all our nascent ideas. But the forest is grown; and, straight or crooked, the trees have to stand pretty much as early circumstances have inclined them. Still, something may be done; nay! if we bring fearless and determined spirits to the work, *much* may be done—much for ourselves, and every thing for our descendants. It rests with us to command, for the rising generation, that education,



whose want we, in our own case, deplore. It rests with us to open, with a golden key, the gates of just knowledge for our children; and to marshal them in those smooth, broad, pleasant paths, which we ourselves have never trod. Equally true it is, that we cannot, for ourselves, command that first, best means for attaining the first, best good. Our opinions have, unfortunately, to be changed, not simply formed; our advance in knowledge must involve forgetting as well as acquiring. We have not, in our own minds, to till a virgin soil, but one surcharged with weeds, rank, entangled, and poisonous. Still it is ours to redeem the soil. We may set the edge of our ploughshares, apply them with a steady and nervous hand, and scatter the good seed in time to reap a harvest.

The second means for the attainment of knowledge is ours, if we choose to exercise it; that is, if we feel the importance of the object, and have courage to employ the means. The importance of the object we *must* feel, if we feel at all for ourselves or for our race; if we are not wholly indifferent to the rank we hold in the scale of being; not wholly indifferent to our moral excellence, to our mental elevation; to our own peace, to our own utility; to the liberty and happiness of our species through all the ages of time to come. And, if such be the mighty consequences depending on the object, shall we lack the courage to employ the means? And what means? to open our eyes and our ears; to throw wide the gates of our understanding; to dare the exercise of our intellectual faculties, and to encourage in others, as in ourselves, a habit of accurate and dispassionate investigation.

We have seen, also, that it is not our own improvement merely that must be advanced or impeded according to our courage or timidity, but that of future generations, whose destiny it is ours to influence. Strongly, then, are

we pledged to lay aside indolence and fear; and to engage honestly in the task of weeding out our prejudices and establishing our opinions.

There is a common error that I feel myself called upon to notice; nor know I the country in which it is more prevalent than in this. Whatever indifference may generally prevail among men, still there are many eager for the acquisition of knowledge; willing to enquire, and anxious to base their opinions upon correct principles. In the curiosity which motives their exertions, however, the vital principle is but too often wanting. They come selfishly, and not generously, to the tree of knowledge. They eat, but care not to impart of the fruit to others. Nay, there are who, having leaped the briar fence of prejudice themselves, will heap new thorns in the way of those who would venture the same.

And have Americans yet to learn that the interests of all are compounded of the interests of each? and that he who, in pursuing his own advantage, immolates one interest of his fellow beings, fails in justice as a man, commits treason as a citizen? And oh! what interest so dear as that of mental improvement? Who is without that interest? or of whom is not that interest sacred? Man, woman, child—who has not a claim to the exercise of his reason? or what injustice may compare with that which says to one, “thought is good for thee,” and to another, “knowledge is to thee forbidden?”

But will this imputation startle my hearers? Will they say, America is the home of liberty, and Americans brethren in equality. Is it so? and may we not ask here, as elsewhere, how many are there, not anxious to monopolize, but to universalize knowledge? how many, that consider their own improvement in relation always with that of their fellow beings, and who feel the imparting of truth

to be not a work of supererogation, but a duty ; the withholding it, not a venial omission, but a treachery to the race. Which of us have not seen fathers of families pursuing investigations themselves, which they hide from their sons, and, more especially, from their wives and daughters? As if truth could be of less importance to the young than to the old; or as if the sex which in all ages has ruled the destinies of the world, could be less worth enlightening than that which only follows its lead!

The observation I have hazarded may require some explanation. Those who arrogate power usually think themselves superior *de facto* and *de jure*. Yet justly might it be made a question whether those who ostensibly govern are not always unconsciously led. Should we examine closely into the state of things, we might find that, in all countries, the governed decide the destinies of the governors, more than the governors those of the governed; even as the labouring classes influence more directly the fortunes of a nation than does the civil officer, the aspiring statesman, the rich capitalist, or the speculative philosopher.

However novel it may appear, I shall venture the assertion, that, until women assume the place in society which good sense and good feeling alike assign to them, human improvement must advance but feebly. It is in vain that we would circumscribe the power of one half of our race, and that half by far the most important and influential. If they exert it not for good, they will for evil; if they advance not knowledge, they will perpetuate ignorance. Let women stand where they may in the scale of improvement, their position decides that of the race. Are they cultivated?—so is society polished and enlightened. Are they ignorant?—so is it gross and insipid. Are they wise?—so is the human condition prosperous. Are they foolish?—so is it unstable and unpromising. Are they



free?—so is the human character elevated. Are they enslaved?—so is the whole race degraded. Oh! that we could learn the advantage of just practice and consistent principles! that we could understand, that every departure from principle, how speciously soever it may appear to administer to our selfish interests, invariably saps their very foundation! that we could learn that what is ruinous to some is injurious to all; and that whenever we establish our own pretensions upon the sacrificed rights of others, we do in fact impeach our own liberties, and lower ourselves in the scale of being!

But to return. It is my object to show, that, before we can engage successfully in the work of enquiry, we must engage in a body; we must engage collectively; as human beings desirous of attaining the highest excellence of which our nature is capable; as children of one family, anxious to discover the true and the useful for the common advantage of all. It is my farther object to show that no co-operation in this matter can be effective which does not embrace the two sexes on a footing of equality; and, again, that no co-operation in this matter can be effective, which does not embrace human beings on a footing of equality. Is this a republic—a country whose affairs are governed by the public voice—while the public mind is unequally enlightened? Is this a republic, where the interests of the many keep in check those of the few—while the few hold possession of the courts of knowledge, and the many stand as suitors at the door? Is this a republic, where the rights of all are equally respected, the interests of all equally secured, the ambitions of all equally regulated, the services of all equally rendered? Is this such a republic—while we see endowed colleges for the rich, and barely *common schools* for the poor; while but one drop of colored blood shall stamp a fellow creature for

a slave, or, at the least, degrade him below sympathy; and while one half of the whole population is left in civil bondage, and, as it were, sentenced to mental imbecility?

Let us pause to enquire if this be consistent with the being of a republic. Without knowledge, could your fathers have conquered liberty? and without knowledge, can you retain it? Equality! where is it, if not in education? Equal rights! they cannot exist without equality of instruction. "All men are born free and equal!" they are indeed so *born*, but do they so *live*? Are they educated as equals? and, if not, can they *be* equal? and, if not equal, can they be free? Do not the rich command instruction? and they who have instruction, must they not possess the power? and when they have the power, will they not exert it in their own favor? I will ask more; I will ask, *do* they not exert it in their own favor? I will ask if two professions do not now rule the land and its inhabitants? I will ask, whether your legislatures are not governed by lawyers and your households by priests? And I will farther ask, whether the deficient instruction of the mass of your population does not give to lawyers their political ascendancy; and whether the ignorance of women be not the cause that your domestic hearths are invaded by priests? Are not these matters of popular interest? matters for popular enquiry? We shall examine to-morrow whether you have not now in your hands all the means necessary for equalizing instruction, not merely among your children but yourselves; so far, at least, as to place your liberties beyond risk of attainder.

This examination will involve all your interests, national and social. Your political institutions have taken equality for their basis; your declaration of rights, upon which your institutions rest, sets forth this principle as vital and inviolate. Equality is the soul of liberty; there is, in fact, no



liberty without it—none that cannot be overthrown by the violence of ignorant anarchy, or sapped by the subtilty of professional craft. That this is the case your reasons will admit; that this is the case your feelings *do* admit—even those which are the least amiable and the least praiseworthy. The jealousy betrayed by the uncultivated against those of more polished address and manners, has its source in the beneficial principle to which we advert, however, (in this, as in many other cases,) misconceived and perverted. Cultivation of mind will ever lighten the countenance and polish the exterior. This external superiority, which is but a faint emanation of the superiority within, vulgar eyes can see and ignorant jealousy will resent. This, in a republic, leads to brutality; and, in aristocracies, where this jealousy is restrained by fear, to servility. Here it will lead the wagoner to dispute the road with a carriage; and, in Europe, will make the foot passenger doff his hat to the lordly equipage which spatters him with mud, while there he mutters curses only in his heart. The unreasoning observer will refer the conduct of the first to the *republican institutions*—the reflecting observer, to the *anti-republican education*. The instruction befitting free men is that which gives the sun of knowledge to shine on all; and which at once secures the liberties of each individual, and disposes each individual to make a proper use of them.

Equality, then, we have shown to have its seat in the mind. A proper cultivation of the faculties would ensure a sufficiency of that equality for all the ends of republican government, and for all the modes of social enjoyment. The diversity in the natural powers of different minds, as decided by physical organization, would be then only a source of interest and agreeable variety. All would be



capable of appreciating the peculiar powers of each ; and each would perceive that his interests, well understood, were in unison with the interests of all. Let us now examine whether liberty, properly interpreted, does not involve, among your unalienable rights as citizens and human beings, the right of equal means of instruction.

Have ye given a pledge, sealed with the blood of your fathers, for the equal rights of all human kind sheltered within your confines ? What means the pledge ? or what understand ye by human rights ? But understand them as ye will, define them as ye will, how are men to be secured in *any* rights without instruction ? how to be secured in the *equal exercise* of those rights without *equality of instruction* ? By instruction understand me to mean, knowledge—*just knowledge* ; not talent, not genius, not inventive mental powers. These will vary in every human being ; but knowledge is the same for every mind, and every mind may and *ought to be* trained to receive it. If, then, ye have pledged, at each anniversary of your political independence, your lives, properties, and honor, to the securing your common liberties, ye have pledged your lives, properties, and honor, to the securing of *your common instruction*. Or will you secure the end without securing the means ? ye shall do it, when ye reap the harvest without planting the seed.

Oh ! were the principle of human liberty understood, how clear would be the principle of human conduct ! It would light us unerringly to our duties as citizens. It would light us unerringly to our duties as men. It would lead us aright in every action of our lives ; regulate justly every feeling and affection of our hearts, and be to us a rule more unerring than laws, more binding than oaths, more enforcing than penalties. Then would passion yield

to reason, selfishness to justice, and the equal rights of others supply the sole, but the sure, immutable limits of our own.

As we have somewhat swerved from our leading subject to consider the nature of equality, let us again pause to consider that of liberty. We have seen that they are twin sisters; and so were they viewed by the effulgent mind of Jefferson, when from his fearless pen dropped the golden words, "All men are born free and equal." Those words his fellow citizens and descendants will have interpreted, when they shall have shed on the minds of the rising generation, and as far as possible on their own, the equal effulgence of just knowledge; before which every error in opinion and every vice in practice will fly as the noxious dews of night before the sun.

Let us, then, pause to consider these immortal words, graven by an immortal pen on the gates of time, "All men are born free and equal."

All men are born free and equal! That is: *our moral feelings acknowledge it to be just and proper, that we respect those liberties in others, which we lay claim to for ourselves; and that we permit the free agency of every individual, to any extent which violates not the free agency of his fellow creatures.*

There is but one honest limit to the rights of a sentient being; it is where they touch the rights of another sentient being. Do we exert our own liberties without injury to others—we exert them justly; do we exert them at the expense of others—unjustly. And, in thus doing, we step from the sure platform of liberty upon the uncertain threshold of tyranny. Small is the step; to the unreflecting so imperceptibly small, that they take it every hour of their lives as thoughtlessly as they do it unfeelingly. Whenever we slight, in word or deed, the feelings

of a fellow creature ; whenever, in pursuit of our own individual interests, we sacrifice the interest of others ; whenever, through our vanity or our selfishness, we interpret our interests unfairly, sink the rights of others in our own, arrogate authority, presume upon advantages of wealth, strength, situation, talent, or instruction ; whenever we indulge idle curiosity respecting the private affairs, opinions, and actions of our neighbours ; whenever, in short, we forget what in justice is due to others, and, equally, what in justice is due to ourselves, we sin against liberty—we pass from the rank of freemen to that of tyrants or slaves. Easy it were to enumerate the many laws by which, as citizens, we violate our common liberties ; the many regulations, habits, practices, and opinions, by which, as human beings, we violate the same. Easy it were ? Alas ! and say I so ? when to enumerate all these our sins against liberty, would be well nigh to enumerate all that we do, and feel, and think, and say ! But let us confine ourselves within a familiar though most important example.

— Who among us but has had occasion to remark the ill-judged, however well intentioned government of children by their teachers ; and, yet more especially, by their parents ? In what does this mismanagement originate ? In a misconception of the relative position of the parent or guardian, and of the child ; in a departure, by the parent, from the principle of liberty, in his assumption of rights destructive of those of the child ; in his exercise of authority, as by right divine, over the judgment, actions, and person of the child ; in his forgetfulness of the character of the child, as a human being, born “free and equal” among his compeers ; that is, having equal claims to the exercise and developement of all his senses, faculties, and powers, with those who brought him into existence, and



with all sentient beings who tread the earth. Were a child thus viewed by his parent, we should not see him, by turns, made a plaything and a slave; we should not see him commanded to believe, but encouraged to reason; we should not see him trembling under the rod, nor shrinking from a frown, but reading the wishes of others in the eye, gathering knowledge wherever he threw his glance, rejoicing in the present hour, and treasuring up sources of enjoyment for future years. We should not then see the youth launching into life without compass or quadrant. We should not see him doubting at each emergency how to act, shifting his course with the shifting wind, and, at last, making shipwreck of mind and body on the sunken rocks of hazard and dishonest speculation, nor on the foul quicksands of debasing licentiousness.

What, then, has the parent to do, if he would conscientiously discharge that most sacred of all duties, that weightiest of all responsibilities, which ever did or ever will devolve on a human being? What is he to do, who, having brought a creature into existence, endowed with varied faculties, with tender susceptibilities, capable of untold wretchedness or equally of unconceived enjoyment; what is he to do, that he may secure the happiness of that creature, and make the life he has given blessing and blessed, instead of cursing and cursed? What is he to do?—he is to encourage in his child a spirit of enquiry, and equally to encourage it in himself. He is never to advance an opinion without showing the facts upon which it is grounded; he is never to assert a fact, without proving it to be a fact. He is not to teach a code of morals, any more than a creed of doctrines; but he is to direct his young charge to observe the consequences of actions on himself and on others; and to judge of the propriety of those actions by their ascertained consequences. He is

not to command his feelings any more than his opinions or his actions; but he is to assist him in the analysis of his feelings, in the examination of their nature, their tendencies, their effects. Let him do this, and have no anxiety for the result. In the free exercise of his senses, in the fair developement of his faculties, in a course of simple and unrestrained enquiry, he will discover truth, for he will ascertain facts; he will seize upon virtue, for he will have distinguished beneficial from injurious actions; he will cultivate kind, generous, just, and honourable feelings, for he will have proved them to contribute to his own happiness and to shed happiness around him.

Who, then, shall say, enquiry is good for him and not good for his children? Who shall cast error from himself, and allow it to be grafted on the minds he has called into being? Who shall break the chains of his own ignorance, and fix them, through his descendants, on his race? But, there are some who, as parents, make one step in duty, and halt at the second. We see men who will aid the instruction of their sons, and condemn only their daughters to ignorance. "Our sons," they say, "will have to exercise political rights, may aspire to public offices, may fill some learned profession, may struggle for wealth and acquire it. It is well that we give them a helping hand; that we assist them to such knowledge as is going, and make them as sharp witted as their neighbors. But for our daughters," they say—if indeed respecting them they say any thing—"for our daughters, little trouble or expense is necessary. They can never *be any thing*; in fact, they *are nothing*. We had best give them up to their mothers, who may take them to Sunday's preaching; and, with the aid of a little music, a little dancing, and a few fine gowns, fit them out for the market of marriage."

Am I severe? It is not my intention. I know that I am



honest, and I fear that I am correct. Should I offend, however I may regret, I shall not repent it; satisfied to incur displeasure, so that I render service.

But to such parents I would observe, that with regard to their sons, as to their daughters, they are about equally mistaken. If it be their duty, as we have seen, to respect in their children the same natural liberties which they cherish for themselves—if it be their duty to aid as guides, not to dictate as teachers—to lend assistance to the reason, not to command its prostration,—then have they nothing to do with the blanks or the prizes in store for them, in the wheel of worldly fortune. Let possibilities be what they may in favor of their sons, they have no calculations to make on them. It is not for them to ordain their sons magistrates nor statesmen; nor yet even lawyers, physicians, or merchants. They have only to improve the one character which they receive at the birth. They have only to consider them as *human beings*, and to ensure them the fair and thorough developement of all the faculties, physical, mental, and moral, which distinguish their nature. In like manner, as respects their daughters, they have nothing to do with the injustice of laws, nor the absurdities of society. Their duty is plain, evident, decided. In a daughter they have in charge a human being; in a son, the same. Let them train up these *human beings*, under the expanded wings of liberty. Let them seek *for* them and *with* them just knowledge; encouraging, from the cradle upwards, that useful curiosity which will lead them unbidden in the paths of free enquiry; and place them, safe and superior to the storms of life, in the security of well regulated, self-possessed minds, well grounded, well reasoned, conscientious opinions, and self-approved, consistent practice.

I have as yet, in this important matter, addressed my-



self only to the reason and moral feelings of my audience ; I could speak also to their interests. Easy were it to show, that in proportion as your children are enlightened, will they prove blessings to society and ornaments to their race. But if this be true of all, it is more especially true of the now more neglected half of the species. Were it only in our power to enlighten part of the rising generation, and should the interests of the whole decide our choice of the portion, it were the females, and not the males, we should select.

When, now a twelvemonth since, the friends of liberty and science pointed out to me, in London, the walls of their rising university, I observed, with a smile, that they were beginning at the wrong end: "Raise such an edifice for your young women, and ye have enlightened the nation." It has already been observed, that women, wherever placed, however high or low in the scale of cultivation, hold the destinies of humankind. Men will ever rise or fall to the level of the other sex ; and from some causes in their conformation, we find them, however armed with power or enlightened with knowledge, still held in leading strings even by the least cultivated female. Surely, then, if they knew their interests, they would desire the improvement of those who, if they do not advantage, will injure them ; who, if they elevate not their minds and meliorate not their hearts, will debase the one and harden the other ; and who, if they endear not existence, most assuredly will dash it with poison. How many, how omnipotent are the interests which engage men to break the mental chains of women ! How many, how dear are the interests which engage them to exalt rather than lower their condition, to multiply their solid acquirements, to respect their liberties, to make them their equals, to wish them even their superiors ! Let them enquire into these

things. Let them examine the relation in which the two sexes stand, and ever must stand, to each other. Let them perceive, that, mutually dependent, they must ever be giving and receiving, or they must be losing ;—receiving or losing in knowledge, in virtue, in enjoyment. Let them perceive how immense the loss, or how immense the gain. Let them not imagine that they know aught of the delights which intercourse with the other sex can give, until they have felt the sympathy of mind with mind, and heart with heart ; until they bring into that intercourse every affection, every talent, every confidence, every refinement, every respect. Until power is annihilated on one side, fear and obedience on the other, and both restored to their birthright—equality. Let none think that affection can reign without it ; or friendship, or esteem. Jealousies, envyings, suspicions, reserves, deceptions—these are the fruits of inequality. Go, then ! and remove the evil first from the minds of women, then from their condition, and then from your laws. Think it no longer indifferent whether the mothers of the rising generation are wise or foolish. Think it not indifferent whether your own companions are ignorant or enlightened. Think it not indifferent whether those who are to form the opinions, sway the habits, decide the destinies, of the species—and that not through their children only, but through their lovers and husbands—are enlightened friends or capricious mistresses, efficient coadjutors or careless servants, reasoning beings or blind followers of superstition.

There is a vulgar persuasion, that the ignorance of women, by favoring their subordination, ensures their utility. 'Tis the same argument employed by the ruling few against the subject many in aristocracies ; by the rich against the poor in democracies ; by the learned professions against the people in all countries. And let us observe,

that if good in one case, it should be good in all ; and that, unless you are prepared to admit that you are yourselves less industrious in proportion to your intelligence, you must abandon the position with respect to others. But, in fact, who is it among men that best struggle with difficulties? —the strong minded or the weak? Who meet with serenity adverse fortune?—the wise or the foolish? Who accommodate themselves to irremediable circumstances? or, when remediable, who control and mould them at will?—the intelligent or the ignorant? Let your answer in your own case, be your answer in that of women.

If the important enquiry which engaged our attention last evening was satisfactorily answered, is there one who can doubt the beneficial effects of knowledge upon every mind, upon every heart? Surely it must have been a misconception of the nature of knowledge which could alone bring it into suspicion. What is the danger of truth? Where is the danger of fact? Error and ignorance, indeed, are full of danger. They fill our imagination with terrors. They place us at the mercy of every external circumstance. They incapacitate us for our duties as members of the human family, for happiness as sentient beings, for improvement as reasoning beings. Let us awake from this illusion. Let us understand what knowledge is. Let us clearly perceive that accurate knowledge regards all equally; that truth, or fact, is the same thing for all human-kind; that there are not truths for the rich and truths for the poor, truths for men and truths for women; there are simply *truths*, that is, *facts*, which all who open their eyes and their ears and their understandings can perceive. There is no mystery in these facts. There is no witchcraft in knowledge. Science is not a trick; not a puzzle. The philosopher is not a conjuror. The observer of nature who envelopes his discoveries



in mystery, either knows less than he pretends, or feels interested in *withholding* his knowledge. The teacher whose lessons are difficult of comprehension, is either clumsy or he is dishonest.

We observed, at our last meeting, that it was the evident interest of our appointed teachers to disguise the truth. We discovered this to be a matter of necessity, arising out of their dependence upon the public favor. We may observe yet another cause, now operating far and wide—universally, omnipotently—a cause pervading the whole mass of society, and springing out of the existing motive principle of human action—competition. Let us examine, and we shall discover it to be the object of each individual to obscure the first elements of the knowledge he professes—be that knowledge mechanical and operative, or intellectual and passive. It is thus that we see the simple manufacture of a pair of shoes magnified into an art, demanding a seven years apprenticeship, when all its intricacies might be mastered in as many months. It is thus that cutting out a coat after just proportions is made to involve more science, and to demand more study, than the anatomy of the body it is to cover. And it is thus, in like manner, that all the branches of knowledge, involved in what is called scholastic learning, are wrapped in the fogs of pompous pedantry; and that every truth, instead of being presented in naked innocence, is obscured under a weight of elaborate words, and lost and buried in a medley of irrelevant ideas, useless amplifications, and erroneous arguments. Would we unravel this confusion—would we distinguish the true from the false, the real from the unreal, the useful from the useless—would we break our mental leading strings—would we know the uses of all our faculties—would we be virtuous, happy, and intelligent beings—would we be useful in our generation—would we

possess our own minds in peace, be secure in our opinions, be just in our feelings, be consistent in our practice—would we command the respect of others, and—far better—would we secure our own—let us enquire.

Let us enquire! What mighty consequences, are involved in these little words! Whither have they not led? To what are they not yet destined to lead? Before them thrones have given way. Hierarchies have fallen, dungeons have disclosed their secrets. Iron bars, and iron laws, and more iron prejudices, have given way; the prison house of the mind hath burst its fetters; science disclosed her treasures; truth her moral beauties; and civil liberty, sheathing her conquering sword, hath prepared her to sit down in peace at the feet of knowledge.

Let us enquire! Oh, words fraught with good to man and terror to his oppressors! Oh words bearing glad tidings to the many and alarm only to the few! The monarch hears them and trembles on his throne! The priest hears them, and trembles in the sanctuary; the unjust judge—and trembles on the judgment seat. The nations pronounce them and arise in their strength. Let us enquire; and behold, ignorance becomes wise, vice forsakes its errors, wretchedness conceives of comfort, and despair is visited by hope. Let us enquire!—when all shall whisper these little words, and echo them in their hearts, truly the rough places shall be made smooth, and the crooked paths straight. Let us enquire; and behold, no evil but shall find its remedy, no error but shall be detected, and no truth but shall stand revealed! Let us enquire! These little words, which presume in nothing, but which promise all things, what ear shall they offend? what imagination shall they affright? Not yours, sons of America! Not yours. What hold ye of good or great? what boast ye of rights, of privileges, of liberty, beyond the rest of the nations, that by

enquiry hath not been won, by enquiry improved and protected? Let us enquire, said your ancestors, when kingly and priestly tyranny smote them on the banks of the Thames or the Seine. Let us enquire, said your fathers, when imperious princes and arrogant parliaments questioned their charters and trampled on their rights. Let us enquire, said Henry, said Jefferson, said Franklin, said the people and congress of '76. Let us enquire; and behold, the enquiry gained to them and their descendants a country—lost to kings and their empires a world!

And shall the sons fear to pronounce, in peace, under the shadow of the olive and the laurel planted by their fathers—shall they, I say, fear to pronounce those little words which, by their ancestors, were uttered under ban and forfeiture, outlawry and excommunication, in prison and under scaffolds, before the bayonets of tyranny and the threatening thunders of leagued armies?

Or, is the race of human improvement ended, and the work of reform completed? Have we attained all truth, rectified all error, so that, sitting down in wisdom and perfection, we may say, "our duty is achieved, our destiny fulfilled?" Alas for our nature, alas for our condition, alas for reason and common sense, if such should be the answer of our presumption, such the decision of our ignorance! Where is the mind so vast, the imagination so sublime, that hath conceived the farthest limits of human improvement, or the utmost height to which human virtue may attain? Or, say! where is the heart so insensible, the mind so debased, that, looking abroad on the face of society, as now disfigured with vice, rapine, and wretchedness, can seriously think and feel farther enquiry superfluous, farther reformation impossible?

Did the knowledge of each individual embrace all the discoveries made by science, all the truths extracted by



philosophy from the combined experience of ages, still would enquiry be in its infancy, improvement in its dawn. Perfection for man is in no time, in no place. The law of his being, like that of the earth he inhabits, is *to move always, to stop never*. From the earliest annals of tradition, his movement has been in advance. The tide of his progress hath had ebbs and flows, but hath left a thousand marks by which to note its silent but tremendous influx.

The first observations of Indian and Egyptian astronomers; the first application of man to civil industry; the first associations of tribes and nations, for the purpose of mutual protection; the invention of an alphabet, the use of each ornamental, and, far better, of each useful art,—stand as so many tide marks in the flood of recorded time, until, applying a lever to his own genius, man invented the printing press, and opened a first highway to enquiry. From that hour, his progress has been accelerating and accelerated. His strides have been those of a giant, and are those of a giant growing in his strength. Mighty was the step he made, when, in Germany, he impeached the infallibility of Rome; mightier yet when, in England, he attacked the supremacy of kings; mightier by far, when, appealing to his own natural rights, he planted in this new world the more new standard of equal liberty; and mightier still shall be his impulse in the onward career of endless improvement, when, rightly reading and justly executing his own decree, he shall extend to every son and daughter within the confines of these free states, liberty's first and only security—virtue's surest and only guide—national, rational, and equal education.

Something towards this has been done, and in no division of this promising republic more than in New-England and the commonwealth of New-York. But, as it may hereafter be my attempt to show, in the efforts yet made

and making, the master spring hath not been touched, the republican principle hath not been hit, and, therefore, is the reform imperfect.

If this be so—and who that looks abroad shall gainsay the assertion?—if this be so—and who that looks to your jails, to your penitentiaries, to your houses of refuge, to your hospitals, to your asylums, to your hovels of wretchedness, to your haunts of intemperance, to your victims lost in vice and hardened in profligacy, to childhood without protection, to youth without guidance, to the widow without sustenance, to the female destitute and female outcast, sentenced to shame and sold to degradation—who that looks to these shall say, that enquiry hath not a world to explore, and improvement yet a world to reform!

Let us enquire. Who, then, shall challenge the words? They are challenged. And by whom? By those who call themselves the guardians of morality, and who *are* the constituted guardians of religion. Enquiry, it seems, suits not them. They have drawn the line, beyond which human reason shall not pass—above which human virtue shall not aspire! All that is without their faith or above their rule, is immorality, is atheism, is—I know not what.

My friends, I will ask you, as I would ask them would they meet the question, what means we possess for settling the point now at issue between the servants of faith and the advocates of knowledge, but what are supplied by enquiry?

Are we miserable creatures, innately and of necessity; placed on this earth by a being who should have made us for misery here and damnation hereafter; or are we born ductile as the gold and speckless as the mirror, capable of all inflection and impression which wise or unwise instruction may impart, or to which good or evil circumstance may incline? Are we helpless sinners, with nought but the anchor of faith to lean upon? Or are we creatures of

noblest energies and sublimest capabilities, fitted for every deed of excellence, feeling of charity, and mode of enjoyment? How may we settle this problem but by enquiry? How shall we know who hath the right and who hath the wrong but by enquiry? Surely the matter is not small, nor the stake at issue trifling. Every interest dearest to the heart, every prospect most exhilarating to the mind, is involved in the question and trembles on the decision.

Oh! then, let us gird up our minds in courage, and compose them in peace. Let us cast aside fear and suspicion, suspend our jealousies and disputes, acknowledge the rights of others and assert our own. And oh! let us understand that the first and noblest of these rights is, the cultivation of our reason. We have seen what just knowledge is; we have ascertained its importance to our worldly prosperity, to our happiness, to our dignity. We have seen, that it regards us, not only individually, but relatively and collectively. We have seen that to obtain it, we have but to seek it, patiently and fearlessly, in the road of enquiry; and that to tread that road pleasantly, securely, profitably, we must throw it open to both sexes—to all ages—to the whole family of humankind.

It now remains for us to distinguish what are the most important subjects of human enquiry. The field of knowledge is wide and the term of our existence short. With many of us life is considerably spent and much charged with worldly and domestic occupation. Still have we leisure sufficient, if we be willing to employ it, for the acquisition of such truths as are most immediately associated with our interests and influential over our happiness.

At our next meeting we shall enquire what these truths of primary importance are, together with the means now in your hands for their general distribution and popular acquisition.



### LECTURE III.

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#### OF THE MORE IMPORTANT DIVISIONS AND ESSENTIAL PARTS OF KNOWLEDGE.

IN our preceding discourses we have investigated, first, the nature and object of just knowledge ; secondly, the means for attaining that knowledge. It remains for us to distinguish those parts or divisions of knowledge, with which it most concerns us to be familiar.

We ascertained at our first meeting just knowledge to consist in, first, acquaintance with ourselves ; and secondly, with all things to which we stand in relation.

Now we stand in relation, more near or more remote, to all substances and all existences within the range of our observation ; that is, to the whole of matter, of which whole we ourselves form a part.

We shall understand this relation more accurately if we bear in mind, that the simple elements of all things are eternal in duration and ever changing in position. We may analyze or decompose all substances, from the rocks of the mountain to the flesh of our own bodies ; we may destroy sentient existences—the ox in the market, or the insect beneath our foot ; we may watch the progress of rapid or more gradual decomposition by age or disease in our own bodies ; but let us not imagine that here is destruction, here is only change. We may evaporate water into steam, or convert it into air ; we may transform the blazing diamond into the elements of dull carbon ; we may

stop the current juices in the plant or the tree, and leave it fading and withering until we find only an earthy heap on the soil; we may arrest the action of organic life, and stretch the warm and sentient being a cold, dull clod of corruption at our feet—yet have we neither taken from, nor added to, the elements before us. We have changed one substance into other substances, ended one existence to start others into being. The same matter is there; its appearance only is changed, and its qualities diversified. These facts being so, as observation and experience attest, it follows, not merely that we form at this moment a part of one great whole, but that we ever have and ever shall form a part of the same. Under various forms, with varying qualities, the elements which now compose our bodies have ever held, and will ever hold, a place in the vast infinity of matter; and, consequently, ever mingling and mingled with the elements of all things, we stand, in our very nature, allied and associated with the air we breathe, the dust, the stone, the flower we tread; the worm that crawls, the insect that hums around us its tiny song, the bird that wheels its flight through the blue ether, and all the varied multitude of animal existences, from the playful squirrel to the lordly elephant.

Thus related, as we are, to all things, and all things to us, how interesting a theatre that in which we stand! How calculated to awaken our intellectual faculties, and excite our moral feelings! Our sympathy is attracted to every creature, our attention to every thing. We see ourselves in the midst of a family endlessly diversified in powers, in faculties, in wants, in desires; in the midst of a world whose existence is one with our own, and in whose history each mode of being is an episode.

Were this simple view of things opened to us with our opening reason, royal indeed were our road in improve-

ment. Easily, as pleasantly, should we tread all the paths of knowledge; and advancing, without check or back-sliding, become familiar with every object within the circle of each opening horizon, until the whole map of material existence, with all its occurrences and changes, lay revealed to our sight and apprehension. Then would our education be simply a voyage of discovery. We should have only to look within us and to look without us, to store up facts and to register them for future generations. Far other is our occupation now. Instead of establishing facts, we have to overthrow errors; instead of ascertaining what *is*, we have to chase from our imaginations what *is not*. Before we can open our eyes, we have to ask leave of our superstitions; before we can exercise our faculties, we have to ask leave of each other. When I think how easy and delightful the task would be to present you with a simple table of just knowledge—to arrange under the single head of MATTER AND ITS PHENOMENA, all the *real* objects of human investigation and real subjects of human enquiry; and when I picture to myself all the imaginary objects which now engage your attention, and all the fanciful subjects on which your imaginations run riot—I know not where to begin, and am fain to ask pardon of you and pardon of myself for the unmeaning words I must employ, the unreal subjects we must consider. But, waving these for a moment, let us enquire what, under these two divisions of knowledge—acquaintance with ourselves and acquaintance with the world without us—are the subjects of primary interest; and in what degree we are at present engaged in their consideration.

First, acquaintance with ourselves. We must allow this to be important. If any thing concerns us, it should be our own bodies and minds. What do we understand of their structure? what of their faculties and powers?



If we understand not these, how may we preserve the health of either? How may we avoid injurious habits, understand our sensations, profit by experience, and establish ourselves in bodily temperance and mental sobriety?

Without pausing to develop all the importance of these studies, we will take its admission for granted; and place, therefore, at the head of our list, anatomy, physiology, and the natural history of man.

In passing to the world without us, we come to a subject of equal importance; one, indeed, which, accurately considered, comprises the knowledge of ourselves in common with that of all existences—physics, or a knowledge of the material world.

Under this head we may remark many distinct subjects of enquiry. The motion of the heavenly bodies, and that of our earth considered as one of them. The form and structure of the earth, with all the appearances and substances it exhibits; the physiology of animals, their habits, instincts, and moral character; with those of all the swarms of existences which diversify matter with endless variety. But, leaving these with other subdivisions, we may confine ourselves to the remark, that without some general acquaintance with the three great branches of physics, commonly called chemistry, natural philosophy, and natural history, more especially that of man, we can know nothing; nothing of ourselves, nothing of the world about us, nothing of the relation we bear to things, nor of their's to us, nor of their's to each other. The best road to correct reasoning is by physical science; the way to trace effects to causes is through physical science; the only corrective, therefore, of superstition is physical science.

Nor let us imagine this difficult of attainment. Of all human accomplishments, it is the easiest. For why? it consists exclusively of facts. It is not that even here

human ingenuity has never devised confusion. But, thanks to the persevering labors of some enlightened individuals, many of them persecuted in their generation, and not a few persecuted in our own, we now understand that if we would investigate nature, in whole or in part, we must use our eyes, ears, and understandings, simply treasure up facts, judge from facts, and reason from the premises of facts.

Admitting, as we must, the importance of this mode of judging and reasoning, we shall perceive the peculiar advantage and necessity of commencing our researches in the world of fact and science of things.

Before we can proceed to examine our opinions, we must ascertain facts drawn from the attentive observation of matter. We must know the anatomy of the matter composing our own bodies, and that of the matter composing all other bodies. We must familiarize our senses and our understandings with the multiform and yet unvarying phenomena of nature. We must know what does happen and what does *not* happen. We must trace in the physical world, cause to cause; or, more properly, occurrence to occurrence; and whenever we do not perceive the clenching link between two occurrences, we must not *imagine* it; we must say *we do not know it*, and we must go, with our five senses open, in search of it. Had human beings, in all ages of the world, done this, where should we not now be in just knowledge? It is time that we seek out the right road. We have groped long enough in error; lived long enough in fairy land; dreamed more than enough of things unseen and causes unknown. We have, indeed, dreamed so much and observed so little, that our imaginations have grown larger than the world we live in, and our judgments have dwindled down to a point.



Having obtained a general view of the philosophy of matter, we may then carry our investigations into the other branches of knowledge, according to our leisure, taste, and opportunity. We may apply ourselves to the past history of man, as handed down to us by tradition, oral or in writing; and comparing these traditions with what we know of the nature of man and the nature of things, of matter and its phenomena, we may judge of their credibility. If we are not prepared thus to judge by accurate analogy, we may receive every fable for matter of fact, swallow every fairy tale for true history, suppose every mythology sound philosophy, and mistake equally the tricks of conjurers and the phenomena of nature for miracles.

We may then peruse with equal interest and advantage the narratives of travellers, and engage in general reading with little risk of taking facts for granted without evidence, or receiving the visions of weak understandings for the lessons of wisdom. We may then, too, examine our opinions with some hope of discriminating between the erroneous and the correct; we may then change or form our opinions with good security for basing them on a solid foundation; we may then exercise our reason, for we shall have facts to exercise it upon; we may then compare popular creeds, and investigate unpopular doubts; we may then weigh all things in the balance of reason, seat our judgment on her throne, and listen to her decisions.

But, it may be asked, how are the generality of men, and, more especially, of women, to find time and opportunity for such preparatory investigations as we acknowledge to be absolutely indispensable? Should we discover that they now spend more time and more opportunity in useless investigations, than they need devote to the most useful; that they now waste more anxious thought, more



precious time, and more hard earned money in fruitless enquiry—enquiry which never can be answered, and whose answer, if possible, could profit them nothing—than would suffice to gratify every laudable curiosity, and store their minds with knowledge, whose utility should be felt at every moment of their lives—should we discover this, would there be no effort made, to turn time and opportunity to better account, and to divert thought and money into the more useful channel?

We spake of enquiry. Behold! my friends, a subject for it! Ask yourselves how ye employ your leisure hours—how ye employ your leisure *day*, the first of the week! Ask, for what have ye raised spacious buildings through your cities and villages, and for what ye pay a host of teachers, interested, as we have seen—as we have *proved*—in deceiving you!

I must pause a moment to conciliate the feelings of my audience: I know the influence exercised by religious teachers, and I know the sway yielded to them; I know the hostility I must excite by exposing the circumstances which render worse than nugatory the lessons of the pulpit, and which interest the press in confirming the errors which the pulpit promulgates. I understand all that I must provoke; but equally do I understand the urgency of the duty which has already led me to expose the fact, that the teachers of the public mind are, by the very circumstances of their situation, constrained to conciliate every prejudice, and gainsay every truth.

Nor rests the fatal necessity to which I called your attention, in my opening discourse, only with our public teachers. Each member of the public feels something of the same. Trained as we all are, more or less, in the ways of hypocrisy—constrained by fear, or by policy, to assume the semblance of such opinions, whether we hold

them secretly or not, as rule the ascendant because they command the wealth of the country; or, should we forbear from expressing what is false, obliged, at the least, to withhold what is true;—constrained, I say, in very self-defence, to keep silence, lest the bread be taken from our mouths, or peace from our firesides; the inutility, or, worse, the mischief of our ordinary public instruction, is apparent, both in its effects and in its cause.

Far be it then from me, in exposing the evil, to reflect upon individuals, who are rather its passive agents than its authors. If some there are, so depraved by reigning corruptions, as to volunteer their increase, and fight their way to false honor and foul wealth, by falsehoods uncalled for, dishonesty and defamation as unmanly as they are gratuitously wicked, still are there others who mourn in secret, while they conciliate ruling prejudices, and who ask pardon of truth while they bow themselves in the house of Rimmon. Well do I know this to be widely true, with respect to the press—widely true also, with respect to the teachers of our youth in schools and colleges—and, disposed am I to believe it partially true, with respect to the clergy. But for these last, more especially, the rail road is marked out, and that they have to tread. Should they depart from it, the very flock would rise up against the shepherd; or let us observe, that if the flock should be convinced by the shepherd, the very calling of the shepherd were destroyed, the craft by which he lives overthrown.

I have seen an honest teacher of religion, born and bred within the atmosphere of sectarian faith, and whose hairs have grown white in the labors of sectarian ministries, open his mind to more expanded views, his heart to more expanded feelings, and as the light dawned upon his own reason, steadily proclaim it to his followers. And what hath been the reward of his honesty? They who should

have blessed, have risen up against him ; the young in years, but the old in falsehood, even among his followers, have sought their own popularity, by proclaiming his heresy ; nor rested from plots and persecutions until they drove him from his own pulpit, and shut the doors of his own church, upon his venerable person.

Such being the reward of sincerity, who then shall marvel at its absence. For myself, in exposing the duplicity of the clergy, I neither marvel at, nor judge it in severity. Hypocrisy is the vice of the age, and hypocrites are made to be its teachers !

Not then in satire of the clergy, but in good will to my fellow creatures, have I attempted the exposure of that craft, which is necessary to the very existence of the clerical profession. And not from indifference to the feelings of my hearers, but from deep sympathy with their vital interests, shall I venture, now and hereafter, to probe their secret thoughts, and expose their most cherished errors. In so doing, never will it be my intention to offend. I would not wound one conscientious prejudice ; not deal a rough word against one feeling of a fellow creature. But I am here to speak what I believe the truth. I am here to speak that for which some have not the courage and others not the independence. I am here, not to flatter the ear, but to probe the heart ; not to minister to vanity, but to urge self-examination ; assuredly, therefore, not to court applause, but to induce conviction. Must it be my misfortune to offend ? bear in mind only that I do it for conscience sake—for *your* sakes. I have wedded the cause of human improvement ; staked on it my reputation, my fortune, and my life ; and as, for it, I threw behind me in earliest youth the follies of my age, the luxuries of ease and European aristocracy, so do I, and so will I, persevere, even as I began ; and devote what remains



to me of talent, strength, fortune, and existence, to the same sacred cause—the promotion of just knowledge, the establishing of just practice, the increase of human happiness.

Such being my motives, such my object, I must entreat you to enquire what the knowledge is, that you learn from your spiritual teachers. “The knowledge by faith,” they will answer for you. “And faith,” they will add, “is the knowledge of things unseen.” Can there be any such knowledge? I put it to your reason. Knowledge we have shown to be ascertained facts. Things unseen! Can human understanding know any thing about them? More I will ask: could it be of any utility were even such knowledge possible? And do ye hire teachers to teach you nonexistent knowledge, impossible knowledge, and knowledge which, even under the supposition of its possibility, could serve no conceivable purpose? We are on the earth, and they tell us of heaven; we are human beings, and they tell us of angels and devils; we are matter, and they tell us of spirit: we have five senses whereby to admit truths, and a reasoning faculty by which to build our belief upon them; and they tell us of dreams dreamed thousands of years ago, which all our experience flatly contradicts.

Again I must intreat your patience—your gentle hearing. I am not going to question your opinions. I am not going to meddle with your belief. I am not going to dictate to you mine. All that I say is, examine; enquire. Look into the nature of things. Search out the ground of your opinions, the *for* and the *against*. Know *why* you believe, understand *what* you believe, and possess a reason for the faith that is in you.

But your spiritual teachers caution you against enquiry—tell you not to read certain books; not to listen to certain

people; to beware of profane learning; to submit your reason, and to receive their doctrines for truths. Such advice renders them suspicious counsellors. By their own creed, you hold your reason from their God. Go! ask them why he gave it.

Be not afraid! If that being which they tell us of exist, we shall find him in his works. If that revelation be his which they tell us to revere, we shall find all nature and its occurrences, all matter and its phenomena, bearing testimony to its truth. Be not afraid! In admitting a creator, refuse not to examine his creation; and take not the assertions of creatures like yourselves, in place of the evidence of your senses and the conviction of your understanding.

But you will say, the clergy are moral teachers no less than religious. They form and amend our practice as well as dictate our belief.

My friends! we have ascertained the contrary. We have seen that from Maine to Missouri—from hence each way to our antipodes—the hired preachers of all sects, creeds, and religions, never do, and never can, teach any thing but what is in conformity with the opinions of those who pay them. We have substantiated the fact, that they never did, and never can, touch the master vice, whatever it be, and wherever found. We know that they ever have, and ever must, persecute truth, by whomsoever discovered—by Galileo, or by Leslie and Lawrence; we know that they have stifled enquiry, wherever started, in every age and every nation on the globe; and that hardly a fact in science or a truth in philosophy, but has been purchased with the blood, or the liberty, or the domestic peace of a martyr. We have traced this conduct of your teachers to its cause. Remove the cause, and the effect shall cease. Give premiums for the discovery and revelation of know-

ledge, not for its repression! Take for your teachers experimental philosophers, not spiritual dreamers! Turn your churches into halls of science, and devote your leisure day to the study of your own bodies, the analysis of your own minds, and the examination of the fair material world which extends around you! Examine the expenses of your present religious system. Calculate all that is spent in multiplying churches and salarizing their ministers; in clothing and feeding travelling preachers, who fill your streets and highways with trembling fanatics, and your very forests with frantic men and hysterical women. Estimate all the fruits of honest industry which are engulfed in the treasuries of bible societies, tract associations, and christian missions; in sending forth teachers to central Africa and unexplored India, who know not the geography of their own country; and, hardly masters of their native tongue, go to preach of things unseen to nations unknown; compassing the earth to add error to ignorance, and the frenzy of religious fanaticism to the ferocity of savage existence. See the multitude and activity of your emissaries! Weigh the expenses of your outlay and outfit, and then examine if this cost and this activity could not be more usefully employed. By a late estimate, we learn the yearly expenses of the existing religious system, to exceed in these United States twenty millions of dollars. Twenty millions! For teaching what? Things unseen, and causes unknown! Why, here is more than enough to purchase the extract of all *just* knowledge—that is, of things *seen* and causes *known*, gathered by patient philosophy through all past time up to the present hour. Things unseen sell dear. Is it not worth our while to compare the value with the cost, and to strike the balance between them?

If we consider that there is no arriving at just practice



but through just opinions, and no arriving at just opinions but through just knowledge, we must perceive the full importance of the proposed enquiry. Twenty millions would more than suffice to make us wise ; and, alas ! do they not more than suffice to make us foolish ? I entreat you, but for one moment, to conceive the mental and moral revolution there would be in this nation, were these twenty millions, or but one half—but one third of that sum, employed in the equal distribution of accurate knowledge. Had you, in each of your churches, a teacher of elementary science, so that all the citizens, young and old, might cultivate that laudable curiosity without which the human animal is lower than the brute, we should not then see men staggering under intoxication, nor lounging in imbecile idleness ; nor should we hear women retailing scandal from door to door, nor children echoing ribaldry in the streets, and vying with the monkey in mischief.

“ But,” you will say, “ the clergy preach against these things.” And when did mere preaching do any good ? Put something in the place of these things. Fill the vacuum of the mind. Awaken its powers, and it will respect itself. Give it worthy objects on which to spend its strength, and it will riot no more in wantonness. Do the clergy this ? Do they not rather demand a prostration of the intellect—a humbling and debasing of the spirit ? Is not their knowledge that of things unseen, speaking neither to the senses, nor to the faculties ? Are not their doctrines, by their own confession, incomprehensible ? Is not their morality based upon human depravity ? Preach they not the innate corruption of our race ? Away with this libel of our nature ! Away with this crippling, debasing, cowardly theory ! Long, long enough hath this foul slander obscured our prospects, paralyzed our efforts, crushed the generous spirit within us ! Away with it ! such a school

never made a race of freemen. And, see! in spite of the doctrine, to what heights of virtue and intelligence hath not man attained! Think of his discoveries in science—spite of chains, and dungeons, and gibbets, and anathemas! Think of his devotion to principle! Even when in error, great in his devotion! Think of the energy stronger than power, the benevolence supreme over selfishness, the courage conquering in death, with which he fought, and endured, and persevered through ages, until he won his haven of liberty in America! Yes! he has won it. The noble creature has proved his birthright. May he learn to use and to enjoy it!

But how shall he do this? Sons and daughters of America! 'tis for you to answer. When will ye improve the liberty for which your fathers sought an unknown world? When will ye appreciate the treasure they have won? When will ye see, that liberty leans her right arm on knowledge, and that knowledge points you to the world ye inhabit?

Consider that world, my friends! Enable yourselves, by mastering the first elements of knowledge, to judge of the nature and importance of all its different branches. Fit yourselves for the examination of your opinions, and then *examine your opinions*. Read, enquire, reason, reflect! Wrong not your understandings by doubting their perception of moral, any more than of physical, truth. Wrong not the God ye worship by imagining him armed with thunders to protect the tree of knowledge from approach. If ye conceive yourselves as holding from one great being your animate existence, employ his first best gift—your reason. Scan with your reason that which ye are told is his word, scan with your senses those which ye are told are his works. Receive no man's assertion. Believe no conviction but your own; and *respect not your own*



until ye *know* that ye have examined both sides of every question ; collected all evidence, weighed, compared, and digested it ; sought it at the fountain head ; received it never through suspicious channels—altered, mutilated, or defaced ; but pure, genuine, from the authorities themselves. Examine ye things ? look to the fact. Examine ye books ? to the text. And, when ye look, and when ye read, be *sure that ye see, and be sure that ye understand*. Ask *why* of every teacher. Ask *why* over every book. While there is a doubt, suspend judgement ; while one evidence is wanting, withhold assent.

Observe here the advantage of material science. Does the physician—(I use the word here, as I shall often have occasion to use it hereafter, to signify the student of physics, or the observer of nature)—does the physician tell you that water is compounded of gases ? He performs the experiment. That the atmosphere is another compound ? The same. That more or less of activity is in all matter ? He shows you the formation of crystals in their bed, and composes and decomposes them before ye. Does he tell you that matter is ever changing, but never losing ? He analyzes the substance before your eyes, and gives you its elements with nothing wanting. Do the anatomist and physiologist describe the structure and texture of your bodies ? They show you their hidden arcana, dissect their parts, and trace their relation ; explain the mechanism of each organ, and observe, with you, its uses and functions. Do the geologist and mineralogist speak to us of the structure and component parts of this globe ? They explain to us the strata of earths ; the position of rocks ; the animal remains they envelope ; the marks they exhibit of convulsion or of rest—of violent and sudden, or of gradual and silent, phenomena. See, then, the superiority of physical science !



The proof comes with the assertion ; the fact constitutes the truth.

But, you will say, there is other evidence than the physically tangible—other truths than those admitted through the senses. There is the more *immediate* and the more *remote* testimony of our senses ; nothing more, nothing less. Will you appeal to numerical and geometrical truth ? Had we no senses, could we know any thing of either ? Were there no objects, no substances and existences around you, how could you conceive of number or of form ? If the child see not *four things*, how shall he understand the meaning of *four* ? If he see not two halves, put them together, divide them, compare them, measure, weigh them, how shall he *know* that two halves are equal to a whole ? or a whole greater than its part ? These are the simple truths conceived by the philosopher of nature, Pestalozzi. Here are the leading beauties of that system of experimental instruction which he so long strove to put in practice, and which time may enable others successfully to develop.

But, I hear you again object, that there are truths appealing only to the mind, or directly to the feelings : such are *moral truths*. The varying degree of sensibility evinced by individuals towards the joys and sorrows of others is apparent to every observer. This sensibility forms the basis of virtue ; and, when by means of experience we have distinguished painful from pleasurable sensations in our own case, this sensibility assists us to estimate them in the case of others. Yet have we no doors by which to admit knowledge but the senses. We ascertain what is good or evil by experience. The beneficial or injurious consequences of actions make us pronounce them virtuous or vicious. The man of cultivated sensibility then refers his

sensations and applies his experience to others, and sympathises in the pain or the pleasure he conceives them to feel. But, here are our moral truths also based upon fact. There is no test of these but experience. That is good which produces good; that evil, which produces evil; and, were our senses different from what they are, our virtue and our vice would be different also. Let us have done with abstractions! Truth is fact. Virtue is beneficial action; vice, mischievous action; virtuous feelings are those which impart pleasure to the bosom; bad feelings, those which disturb and torment it. Be not anxious in seeking your rule of life. Consult experience; your own sensations, the sensations of others. These are surer guides than laws and doctrines, and when the law and the doctrine coincide not with the evidence of your senses, and the testimony of your reason, be satisfied that *they*, that is, the *law* and the *doctrine*, are false.

Think of these things! Weigh the truth of what I advance! Go to your churches with your understandings open. Enquire the meaning of the words ye hear—the value of the ideas. See if they be worth twenty millions of dollars! And, if they be not, withhold your contributions. But—ye will be afraid. Afraid! of what?—of acting conscientiously? of acting reasonably? Come! learn, then, of a stranger and a woman! Be bold to speak what ye think and feel; and to act in accordance with your belief. Prefer your self respect to the respect of others. Nay! *secure* your own respect, and *command* that of others.

I speak with warmth. I *feel* warmly. The happiness, the honor, the dignity of man, are dear to my heart. His ignorance afflicts me; his cowardice afflicts me; his indif-



ference afflicts me. He feels not for himself, he feels not for his race.

But—ye will wipe off this stain. Ye will awake to the uses of things. Ye will enquire. Ye will collect just knowledge. Ye will cultivate your reason. Ye will improve your nature.

Many are the societies, associations, treasury funds, among you. Organize a society for the promotion of just knowledge. Raise an edifice, sacred to national union and national instruction, capable of holding from three to five thousand individuals, where the citizens of all ages may assemble for the acquisition of useful knowledge, and for the cultivation of that social feeling and brotherly fellowship, without which no real republic can have an existence. Select good instructors, masters of science, and capable of developing it easily and agreeably. Attach to the institution your museums and your public libraries. These are of little use single, detached, and unassisted by the elucidations of experienced instructors. Such an institution as that I have now sketched, should be open to as many as possible free of all charge. The rent of *a portion* of the seats might be devoted to the remuneration of such individuals as could not bestow their labors gratuitously. The building itself, I am disposed to hope, could be raised for such a purpose by voluntary contributions.

As soon as possible, there should be attached to this hall of science, a school of industry, which, in time, might be made to cover its own expenses by the labor of the children. Here, besides the imparting of useful trades, would be held also, the earlier classes in intellectual knowledge: and, when sufficiently advanced, the young people could perfect their studies in the hall of science. In the commencement, the school of industry might be conducted on the plan of a day school only, where, at successive hours,



the teachers in the various branches of knowledge, mechanical and intellectual, might hold their classes.

Nor let the rich imagine that such a plan of education would not advantage *them* equally with the poor. What is the education they now command? At once false, imperfect, and expensive. Nor let them imagine that *any* can be well trained until *all* are well trained. Example is more than precept. While the many are left in ignorance, the few cannot be wise, for they cannot be virtuous. Look to your jails, your penitentiaries, your poor-houses! Look to your streets, your haunts of vice, your hovels of wretchedness! Look to the unhappy victims of poverty, of passion, gambling, drinking. Alas, the heart turns sick, and the tongue falters, under the enumeration of all the shapes and sounds of suffering which affright the eye and the ear of humanity!

And what is the cause of all this? Ignorance! Ignorance! There is none other. Oh! then, be up and be doing! Rich and poor, be up and be doing! Are ye not all fellow creatures? Are ye not all of one form, of one nature? Have ye not all the same wants? Oh! then, why have ye not the same interests? And ye have—ye have. Oh that ye could believe it! Oh that ye could see it! Oh that ye would unite under the wings of liberty as brothers, as equals, as fellow men! Oh that ye would enter as one family the courts of knowledge, and cast down at her feet your prejudices, your dissensions, your jealousies, your fears! Whenever the people of all the larger towns shall begin the good work of popular and equal instruction, the same must soon become a state concern; and instead of endowing, as is now the custom, colleges for the erroneous education of the few, we shall see spread throughout the land, national institutions for the rational education of the many. To this primary

object will be then directed the legislation of all the states; to the same object the taxation of all the states; to the same, also, those contributions which are now devoted to the building of sectarian churches, each frowning defiance at the other, and sectarian preachers all flourishing the torch of discord, and fighting each his own battle for wealth and supremacy, against common sense and the common weal.

But the tree which hereafter shall shadow the land, must grow from a small seed. Plant ye that seed now, that ye may see it shoot and blossom, and that your children may reap of its fruits. Look around upon each other as upon fellow citizens and fellow creatures, interested alike in the discovery of the true and the useful, for the common advantage of all. Unite—unite for the promotion of knowledge! Exchange the spirit of sectarianism for that of universal love, charity, and toleration. Turn from the teachers of strife, and seek ye out enquirers after truth. Look around first among yourselves. Seek out the talent that is at home, and when ye find it not, invite it from afar. Encourage the wise to come among ye instead of the foolish; the peaceful and enlightened instead of the noisy ignorant; the reasoner instead of the declaimer; the child of science who will give you all he knows, and seek with you what he knows not, instead of the master by right divine, who promulgates doctrines without advancing evidence, and who stuns our human reason, as our human ears, with absurdities which, *he says*, come from heaven.

With such guides, and engaged in such investigations and undertakings, as I have ventured to recommend, you will all meet on common ground. You will no longer see in each other Calvinists, baptists, catholics, Lutherans,



methodists, and I know not what; you will see only human beings. The halls of science are open to all; her truths are disputed by none. She says not to one, "*eat no meat on Fridays;*" to another, "*plunge in the river;*" to a third, "*groan in the spirit;*" to a fourth, "*wait for the spirit;*" to a fifth, "*eat bread in the Lord;*" to a sixth, "*eat the Lord in bread;*" to a seventh, "*dance in divine praise;*" to an eighth, "*dance not at all;*" to a ninth, "*perceive in things visible the shadows of things unseen;*" to a tenth, "*there is for you salvation;*" and to nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of the human race, "*ye were born for eternal fire.*" Science says nothing of all this. She says, only, "observe, compare, reason, reflect, understand:" and the advantage is, that we can do all this without quarrelling.

I have now attempted to substantiate, with you, the nature, object, and consequences of just knowledge; the means proper for its attainment, and the measures requisite for securing those means to yourselves and your children.

Considering the investigations we have held together in our meetings of Tuesday, Thursday, and this evening, as introductory to the examination of existing opinions, and the present mode of spending the leisure time and surplus money (which I pray you to bear in mind is the surplus industry) of the nation, I propose that we investigate, at our next meeting, more closely the subject which now engages your weekly attention in your churches.

The acquisition of knowledge being essential to our happiness, as being the only means by which we can attain to truth in opinions, and wisdom in practice, it is important that we bestow on every branch of it, an attention exactly proportionate to its utility. We have observed



upon the importance of some now entirely neglected. It is well that we weigh accurately the value of that which now engrosses twenty millions per annum of the national wealth, and that we hereafter apportion to it, liberally and readily, so much of both as we may discover it to deserve—**and no more.**

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LECTURE IV.

RELIGION.

I HAVE selected for our consideration this evening a subject which we are generally accustomed to consider as of vital importance; which is usually made to occupy the human mind from the cradle to the grave, and which, however varying in the views and interpretations of its expounders, is conceived to constitute the polar star of human conduct; to be our only guide towards virtue, our only bar from vice, our source of comfort, our anchor of hope, and at once the alarming deterrer from crime and its terrific avenger. My hearers will already have divined that our subject is RELIGION.

To those who may already have substantiated with me those first premises, which I am ever desirous should be seen and understood before I enter on the discussion of isolated topics, or approach the tests of reason and experience to all or any of the multiform tribe of human opinions—to those, I say, among this audience, who may have attended the three preliminary discourses on knowledge, closed last evening, I might consider all prefatory observations on the present occasion unnecessary. But, as in all probability, I am addressing a portion of this audience for the first time, I feel unwilling to launch with undue precipitancy into a discussion calculated perhaps to alarm the fears of some, and the honest prejudices of others.

Myself a scholar, not a teacher, who have purchased such knowledge as I possess, by years of self-directed study, persevering observation, and untiring reflection, I can well conceive, for I myself have experienced, the doubts, difficulties, hopes, fears, and anxieties, which beset the awakening mind in the early stage of enquiry; the indistinct and, often, evanescent perceptions which encourage, and then check, and then again encourage, again to intimidate its advance; the conflicting thoughts and feelings with which it has to struggle ere it can vanquish early impressions, and consent to receive new ones, admit ideas subversive of those which had grown with its growth, and which, associated with tender recollections, cling to the heart as well as the head, or, not unfrequently, grafted on the imagination of childhood, by an education as cruel as erroneous, continue to alarm the fancy and agitate the nerves even after the judgment has pronounced them chimeras. All this I can understand, for all this I have either felt or observed in others. Anxiously, therefore, would I temper my words to the timid, and, if possible, the truths themselves, which we are met to search out and investigate.

If, then, in manner or in matter, I should touch too harshly on the opinions of some, or the feelings of any, I will pray them to absolve me of every desire but that of eliciting truths important to the well-being of man; of every intention but that of administering to the instruction, and consequently, to the happiness of those I may address. But, will it be asked, why I conceive myself fitted to impart instruction, and increase the sum of human happiness? For I must observe, that the individual who should successfully attempt the one, *must* succeed in the other; error and misery being inseparable companions, and knowledge and happiness the same. If I have thus conceived of myself, it has been neither (as I at least believe) through



too high a valuation of my own acquirements, nor too eager a desire to assume that tone of dictation which I am accustomed to deprecate in others. I have advanced just too far in knowledge to overrate my attainments; just far enough at once to understand my own deficiencies, and to have detected the false pretensions of many self-called wise. It is to render apparent the simplicity of real, and the charlatanism of false learning, that I have volunteered—not, I request you to believe, without due reflection, and a thorough understanding of all the criticism, censure, and, I may say, unseemly abuse, which I was about to encounter:—that I have volunteered, I say, to impart to others, what I myself know, and, more than all, to enlighten them as to what can *really be known*. This has been the more especial object of my previous discourses on knowledge; and, as we then observed, so must I now repeat, that until we see clearly what *knowledge is*, we cannot perceive truth, detect error, nor possess one really accurate, reasoned, and consistent opinion.

Knowledge, we ascertained to consist in an accumulation of facts. The doors by which we admit these facts, are our senses; and the means we possess for judging, comparing, analysing, and arranging these facts, are supplied by our faculties, intellectual and moral. Had we *only* senses, each impression would disappear with the object which excited it; in which case, no knowledge, or accumulation of facts, could exist for us. But, having memory, we can retain each impression, by whichever of our senses received; having judgment, we compare and arrange these impressions; having imagination, we ingeniously combine impressions, however removed as to time, distant as to place, or slightly assimilated by affinity or resemblance. And, having moral feelings, we consider all occurrences with a reference to the good or evil they may induce to our race.

By these cursory remarks, it is my object to lead to the observation, that nothing can be known where there is nothing to operate on our senses; or, to place more accurately the position, *where we have no primary sensations to constitute elementary facts.*

In my opening discourse upon the nature of knowledge, I had occasion to insist especially on this truth; reminding my then audience, that the sciences but too generally taught on the erroneous principle of *assumed* instead of *substantiated* data, (we here instanced arithmetic, geometry, and morals,) were in reality based upon demonstrations supplied by positive sensations. I will not say that the teachers of unreal science, and dogmatical declaimers upon imaginary subjects and unmeaning words, are aware of the stumbling block thrown in the way of the human intellect by the old; and, alas, still the customary method of imparting these most important branches of knowledge; but I will say, that whether awake or blind to the consequences, those consequences are as favourable to the reign of their errors, as they are fatal to the progress of truth and the vital interests of man. Were every teacher called upon to substantiate the elementary facts upon which he builds the fabric of his science, how would the number of our dogmatical assertions and unsubstantiated doctrines—ay! and the list of our sciences themselves, be curtailed!

In that dawn of intellect, however brilliant, which broke on ancient Greece, when the range of human observation was circumscribed within the limits imposed by a clumsy and imperfect system of navigation, and by a world of unbroken forest, and widely extended barbarism, and farther circumscribed within the limits of the human vision, unaided by telescope or microscope, and all the ingenious materiel which now aids the labours of the physician, and has revealed to us the anatomy of matter, with all its

wonder-working qualities—such as we are accustomed to distinguish by the names of attraction, electricity, resistance, form, colour, motion, rest, and we may add, feeling, thought, and life. In that bright, but only opening dawn of human enquiry, science had hardly an existence. Facts were wanting; the means for accumulating these were not devised, and therefore, while excelling in all the arts for which the state of his knowledge, the form of his government, and his exquisite physical organization combined to fit him, (we may here more especially particularize painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, and oratory,) we observe the ingenious Athenian to have been invariably a false logician, and an absurd physician. Physician indeed was a word inapplicable to him, for he knew nothing of physics. With him, all was theory and nothing fact; and knowledge, let it ever be remembered, is all fact, and never theory.

But, before we leave the interesting people to whom we have alluded, I would request you to observe, that while the moderns have opened a field of inquiry unknown to the ancients—while they have substantiated facts subversive of all their dreams—we are still in the habit of employing in our seminaries of learning, such of their elementary books, as the devastation of time and of early Christian fanaticism have spared to us, and of following out their method of instruction wherever it was most defective. Thus are we still in the habit of imparting to the child a first idea of number through the medium of allegorical ciphers, instead of tangible and visible objects; thus do we still persist in substantiating solely by a process of abstract reasoning, based upon verbal sophisms, the truths involved in geometrical science, instead of first submitting those truths in the form of facts to the eye; and thus also are we wise enough to persecute such teachers as have judgment



sufficient to distinguish the better method, and courage sufficient to attempt its adoption. We might here further observe, that the logic of Aristotle, with its text additionally obscured and confounded by the labours of puzzle-headed commentators, was, till within a few years, held in vulgar respect, and vulgar use, throughout the seminaries of the world. And, should we examine, we might find, in spite of the labours of a Locke and a Condillac, and others, wiser yet, because aided by the light previously thrown on the path of knowledge by a succession of giant intellects, that the erroneous mode of reasoning admired in ancient Greece, yet lives, under modified but, perhaps therefore, more dangerous forms, in the schools, colleges, and churches of modern Europe, and revolutionized America.

I may be alluding here to subjects unfortunately foreign to the apprehension of a large portion of this audience. Unfortunately, say I? ay! and most inconsistently and unjustly: inconsistently, if we consider the nature of the national institutions which secure equal rights, and consequently, equal instruction, (necessary, as I have formerly shown, to the understanding, protection, and just exercise of those rights,) to all the citizens; and unjustly, if we consider the great principle of liberty, which proclaims to the enlightened mind the equal rights of all human kind. If the prefatory observations which I have felt necessary for the elucidation of our subject, should prove difficult of apprehension to any present, may it serve as an additional stimulus towards the adoption of some measures for the popular instruction, by devoting some of the now misspent time, and misspent money, to this desirable object. Now, as on all other occasions, my utmost ingenuity is applied as well to simplify my words as my arguments; and I wish the least informed of my hearers could believe that all the facts to which I refer, and all the learning to which

I find myself constrained to allude, are of most easy attainment; far, far easier than are the errors over which they are now perhaps weekly stumbling in the churches of this city.

But, to return from our digressions, and to point out more distinctly the conclusions towards which my previous observations have aimed:—it is a fact well known to the really enlightened, and well known also, I believe, to the designing, who live by the ignorance of the multitude, that every thing depends upon the *manner* of conveying instruction, and upon the first premises from which subsequent arguments are deduced, and thus final conclusions established.

It is not many years, since a native of Switzerland, whose opportunities were confined within the limits prescribed by poverty, and to the society of a simple mountain peasantry, but whose native intellect, and unsophisticated observation, led him to distinguish some first principles, which the more learned have been accustomed to overlook; and, above all, whose beautiful moral feelings, led him to see in every human being, a brother—it is only as it were yesterday, that this simple philosopher, among a simple people, caught a first glimpse of a true and rational method of instruction; namely, by first addressing the senses, and through them, awakening the faculties, commanding the attention, and convincing the reason. Led by his example, other generous minds have labored to improve the idea he had originated; and the day must be fast approaching, when the same correct principle will be applied to every branch of knowledge, and prevail throughout the civilized world.

And yet, hitherto, the enemies of human improvement, have shown a quicker scent to the consequences of the radical reform, suggested by Pestalozzi, than have the



nations who are to profit by it. Even the leaden faculties of the despot of Austria, quickened by the imperial anxiety, as he himself expressed it, to possess within his dominions, *not wise men but obedient subjects*, could perceive the danger to kingcraft, and its coadjutor priestcraft, in a mode of instruction which taught the opening mind to see through the eye, and hear through the ear, and believe only upon the testimony of fact, experiment, and experience. The young Pestalozzian schools, started by the patriots of Italy, in the short dawn of liberty which so lately broke on their unhappy country, only to close in darker night, were overthrown, and their very foundations ploughed up, by the soldiers of the holy ally. In Spain, similar efforts met of course with a similar fate. In Switzerland, Pestalozzi's native Switzerland, the aristocratic cantons saw the threatened danger to the pretensions of the few in the simple labors of the friend of the many. In France, the Jesuits, resuscitated for a while by the imbecile Bourbons, persecuted alike all instruction but that patronized by the servants of religion: and, even here, in republican America, such has been the influence of superstition, and of the teachers of superstition, that the efforts of Pestalozzian disciples, have been for the most part paralyzed, and invariably impeded.

And why in all countries—why in either world this persecution?

Because educators of youth, who speak to the mind, by tangible objects presented to the senses, and who encourage their disciples to look to things, and to seek the proof in the fact, have been supposed to prepare unmanageable subjects for kings, and troublesome disciples for priests. And most wise this apprehension on the part of those who would command the blind obedience, or the blind belief of their fellow-men! Most wise this apprehension on the part



of those whose power lies in the weakness of those they rule, or in the ignorance of those they lead! They alone, who have justice on their side, fear not to have to do with free minds; they alone, who have truth on their side, fear not to encounter knowledge.

But, would *we* not have truth and justice on our side? What interests have *we* inconsistent with either? What have *we* to fear from the bold enquiry of free intellects? Why should *we* shrink from the fulness and from the universality of knowledge?

But what is knowledge? Again must we put the question. Again must we repeat the answer: for on this answer, my friends, depends the truth or the falsehood of every opinion we hold, the reality or unsubstantiality of every subject presented for our investigation.

Knowledge signifies *things known*. Where there are no *things known*, there is no *knowledge*. Where there are no *things to be known*, there *can be no knowledge*. We have observed that every science, that is, every branch of knowledge, is compounded of certain facts, of which our sensations furnish the evidence. Where no such evidence is supplied, we are without *data*; we are without first premises; and when, without these, we attempt to build up *a science*, we do as those who raise edifices without foundations. And what do such builders construct? *Castles in the air*.

Having now, I trust, substantiated the nature of knowledge, and the basis of all true science, I would suggest the propriety of examining into the reality of the science, current among us under the varying name of religion, theology, or divinity. As this science now draws from the surplus industry of the American nation, twenty millions per annum, and as it is legally authorised to consume all the leisure days of the industrious classes, and farther re-

commended to consume all the leisure hours snatched from their days of labor, I think we must admit the examination to be not uncalled for.

It will be conceded that religion engulfs more money and more time, than any subject which ever agitated the enquiring mind of man. You will reply, that it is because it involves his most important interests. Such indeed ought to be the case, judging from all that is expended upon it.

Admitting religion to be the most important of all subjects, its truths must be the most apparent; for we shall readily concede, both that a thing true, must be always of more or less importance—and that a thing essentially important, must always be indisputably true. Now, again, I conceive we shall be disposed to admit, that exactly in proportion to the indisputability of a truth, is the proof it is capable of affording; and that, exactly in proportion to the proof afforded, is our admission of such truth and belief in it.

If, then, religion be the most important subject of human enquiry, it must be that also, which presents the most forcible, irrefragable, and indisputable truths to the enquirer. It must be that on which the human mind can err the least, and where all minds must be the most agreed. If religion be at once a science, and the most true of all sciences, its truths must be as indisputable as those in any branch of the mathematics—as apparent to all the senses, as those revealed by the chemist, or observed by the naturalist, and as easily referred to the test of our approving or disapproving sensations, as those involved in the science of morals.

To ask if this be the case, might seem putting a question in satire. And it is not I who will use a weapon of ridicule, where the opinions and feelings of my fellow



creatures are concerned. Against designing teachers of error, I will use any and every weapon within the compass of my talents and acquirements to wield; and against error itself, considered apart from those who may misconceive of its nature, the same. But ill-fitted were I for the task I have volunteered, ill-fitted to assist in letting down the barrier which holds back the many from the courts of knowledge—ill fitted, I say, were I to address the popular mind, if I could idly wound the popular feeling;—ill-fitted and unworthy, to approach the tests of reason and experience, to human practice and opinion, if I should treat with levity one honest error, or make truth a cause of offence to one conscientious bosom. Far be such consequences from my words, as they are from my heart, while we weigh in the balance that—must we call it science? whose value is now estimated at a yearly tax of twenty millions!

Must we call it science, I asked? Is religion a science? Is it a branch of knowledge? Where are the *things known* upon which it rests? Where are the accumulated facts of which it is compounded? What are the human sensations to which it appeals?

I request your undivided attention to the present investigation. I request you to keep in view what we have ascertained all knowledge to be, and how we have observed all knowledge to be acquired. Unless these simple primary truths be ever present to the mind, it is without a standard by which to judge any fact or any opinion; and reflection or reasoning, to any useful purpose, with any chance of rational results, is absolutely impossible to it.

Knowledge then, (my hearers will forgive the reiteration,) is compounded of *things known*. It is an accumulation of facts gleaned by our senses, within the range of material existence, which is subject to their investigation. As I observed on a former occasion, the number of objects com-



prised within the circle of human observation is so multiplied, and the properties or qualities of these objects so diversified, that, with a view to convenient and suitable divisions in the great work of inspecting the whole, and also with a view to the applying more order and method in the arrangement of the facts collated in the wide field of nature, they have been placed under different heads, each of which we may call *a branch of knowledge*, or, more succinctly, *a science*. Thus, do we consider the various living tribes which people the elements? we class our observations under the head of natural history. Do we direct our attention to the structure and internal mechanism of their bodies? we designate the results of our inspection under the heads anatomy and physiology. Do we trace the order of occurrences and appearances in the wide field of nature? we note them under natural philosophy. Do we analyze substances, and search out their simple elements? chemistry. Do we apply ourselves to the measurement of bodies, or calculate the heights and distances of objects? geometry. And so on through all the range of human observation, extending from the relative position of the heavenly bodies, and accurate calculation of their courses, to the uses, habits, structure and physiology of the delicate plant which carpets our earth.

It may be here suggested, in accordance with the vague notions still current respecting the nature of knowledge, that there is yet a science, which rests not upon the evidence of common individual sensations, namely, history, which is supplied by the recorded sensations of others.

I have already observed, in my opening discourses upon knowledge, that history is not, properly speaking, *knowledge*, only *probability*. This probability is less or greater, according to the proximity or remoteness of the circumstances it relates; according to the style of the narrator,

the accuracy and extent of the knowledge he displays, the consistency of his statements one with another, and, above all, with the result of our (the reader's) own observation and experience. Human tradition, written or spoken, is only *history* so long as it relates probabilities; when it relates improbabilities, it is *fable*. Even the histories best authenticated by the testimonies of concurring probabilities, living witnesses or surviving monumental remains, are doubtless filled with erroneous statements; and the judicious reader, in admitting the general outline or thread of the relation, is well aware that his acquaintance with the whole must be very imperfect, and his conceptions of the details both confused and mistaken.

The knowledge, then, supplied by history, is not positive, but only relative. It cannot be admitted as knowledge, until it is corroborated by all the knowledge accumulated by our experience; and, whenever our observation of the phenomena of nature refutes the assertions of the historian, we distinguish the latter immediately for erroneous. History, therefore, can only testify to itself; that is, to its own probability. If it relate circumstances in accordance with the nature of man, and the nature of things, we receive it as credible; if it relate circumstances in violation of these, we discard it as spurious. We may here remark as a consequent, that no history can be received in testimony of any occurrence opposed to the established course of natural phenomena; since this would be to receive the reported or traditionary experience of others in preference to our own, which, in the case of a rational being, would be impossible.

Now let us see where, in the table of knowledge, we may class religion. Of what part or division of nature, or material existence, does it treat? What bodies, or what properties of tangible bodies, does it place in contact with

our senses, and bring home to the perception of our faculties.

It clearly appertains not to the table of human knowledge, for it treats not of objects discoverable within the field of human observation. "No," will you say? "but its knowledge is superhuman, unearthly—its field is in heaven."

My friends, the knowledge which is not human, is of slippery foundation to us human creatures. Things *known*, constitute knowledge; and here is a science treating of things unseen, unfelt, incomprehended! Such cannot be *knowledge*. What then is it? Probability? possibility? theory? hypothesis? tradition? written? spoken? by whom? when? where? Let its teachers—nay! let all earth reply!

But what confusion of tongues and voices now strike on the ear!

From either Indies, from torrid Africa, from the frozen regions of either pole, from the vast plains of ancient Asia, from the fields and cities of European industry, from the palaces of European luxury, from the soft chambers of priestly ease, from the domes of hierarchal dominion, from the deep cell of the self-immolated monk, from the stony cave of the self-denying anchorite, from the cloud-capt towers, spires and minarets of the crescent and the cross, arise shouts, and hosannas, and anathemas, in the commingled names of Brama, and Veeshnu, and Creeshna, and Juggernaut; heavenly kings, heavenly queens, triune deities, earth-born gods, heaven-born prophets, apotheosized monarchs, demon enlightened philosophers, saints, angels, devils, ghosts, apparitions, and sorceries!

But, worse than these sounds which but stun the ear and confound the intellect, what sights, oh human kind!



appal the heart ! The rivers of earth run blood ! Nation set against nation ! brother against brother ! Man against the companion of his bosom ; and that soft companion, maddened with the frenzy of insane remorse for imaginary crimes, fired with the rage of infatuated bigotry, or subdued to diseased helplessness and mental fatuity, renounces kindred, flies from social converse, and pines away a useless or mischievous existence in sighings and tremblings, spectral fears, uncharitable feelings, and bitter denunciations ! Such are thy doings, oh religion ! Or, rather, such are thy doings, oh man ! While standing in a world so rich in sources of enjoyment, so stored with objects of real enquiry and attainable knowledge, yet shutting thine eyes, and, worse, thy heart, to the tangible things and sentient creatures around thee, and winging thy diseased imagination beyond the light of the sun which gladdens thy world, and contemplation of the objects which are here to expand thy mind and quicken the pulses of thy heart !

“But,” say the teachers of that which is not knowledge, which may not be called a science, but which devours the treasure of nations and maddens the intellects of men, “that which we teach, unseen, unknown, unfelt by others, is revealed to us ; incomprehended of others, is understood by us ; unknown to others, is by us ascertained.”

Ha ! has their God of justice children of preference ? Does their God of wisdom open worlds to the observation of a few especial ministers, who have not senses to investigate the objects presented to them, or, at the least, faculties to describe those objects intelligibly to others ? Does their God of beneficence reveal his nature to those who can neither comprehend nor pourtray it ? his will, to creatures who, in expounding it, convulse human society to its centre ? Are we to believe this ? Oh, my fellow-beings ! have we believed this so long ?

Sisters and brothers ! ye more especially who, knowing the least of things, believe the most in doctrines ; who, rocked perhaps in the cradle by fond but mistaken mothers, closed nightly your infant eyes to troubled sleep, upon tales of wicked angels, and tempting devils ; and opened them, to shrink, under the blessed light of morning, from the imaginary frown of a revengeful God—on ye, more especially, do I call, to arouse the faculties which superstition may have benumbed ; and to put the question to your reason, if all the doctrines of the servants of religion are not inconsistent with their own assumed first premises ? Could a Being of Wisdom demand of ye to spend your time and torture your faculties in imagining things which ye never saw ? worlds beyond the reach of human ken, and existences of whose nature ye can form no conception ? Could a Being of Justice command ye to prostrate the reason he should have given, and swear credence to doctrines, which they even who teach, pretend not to understand ? Could a Being of Beneficence visit in anger the errors of the children of his hand, and delight in the torment of those whose ignorance he could enlighten, and whose sorrows he could heal ?

Oh, my fellow-beings ! let us leave these inconsistencies to those who teach them ! Let us leave things unseen and causes unknown, to those who vend them in this land for twenty millions of dollars ; and, in other lands, less free and more benighted than ours, for that sum twenty times told. Let us turn from that which is *not* knowledge, to all which *is* knowledge. Let us leave theory for fact ; the world of the imagination for that of the eye ; laws graven on stones for those graven on the heart ! Let reason be our guide, observation our teacher, our own bosoms our judges !

But, alas ! ere this may be done, our reason must be exercised, our observation awakened, our feelings quickened,





by that spirit of charity and brotherhood, which jarring creeds have through ages stifled, and which just knowledge can alone impart!

It has been my object, in this, as in my previous discourses, to develop with you the nature of knowledge, to substantiate in what it consists, and where and how it may be found. I have farther, on the present occasion, attempted to prove that you are now engaged in the pursuit of what is *not* knowledge. That you are now paying your quota of the twenty millions per annum towards the support of a system of error, which, from the earliest date of human tradition, has filled the earth with crime and deluged its bosom with blood, and which, at this hour, fills your country with discord, and impedes its progress in virtue, by lengthening the term of its ignorance.

The conclusions I am desirous should be drawn from our investigations of this evening, are the same which our judgments must draw from observation of, and reflection upon, the events passing before our eyes in the walks of life. How do these exhibit the danger of looking out of our own nature and our own world for subjects of enquiry! How do these admonish us of the errors of our ways, and check the impotent presumption of our perverted curiosity, which, aiming at things beyond our vision and so beyond our comprehension, neglects the fair field of nature it is ours to admire; the human duties and charities it is ours to fulfil; and the human delights it is ours to administer and to enjoy.

I will pray ye to observe how much of our positive misery originates in our idle speculations in matters of faith, and in our blind, our fearful, forgetfulness of facts—our cold, heartless, and, I will say, *insane* indifference to visible causes of tangible evil, and visible sources of tangible happiness? Look to the walks of life I beseech ye—



look into the public prints—look into your sectarian churches—look into the bosoms of families—look into your own bosoms, and those of your fellow-beings, and see how many of our disputes and dissensions, public and private—how many of our unjust actions—how many of our harsh judgments—how many of our uncharitable feelings—spring out of our ignorant ambition to rend the veil which wraps from our human senses the knowledge of things unseen, and from our human faculties the conception of causes unknown? And oh, my fellow beings! do not these very words *unseen* and *unknown*, warn the enthusiast against the profanity of such enquiries, and proclaim to the philosopher their futility? Do they not teach us that religion is no subject for instruction, and no subject for discussion? Will they not convince us, that as beyond the horizon of our observation, we can *know* nothing, so within that horizon is the only safe ground for us to meet in public?

I know how far from this simple conviction we now are. Perhaps at this very moment, the question, *what does she believe*, is uppermost in the thoughts of two thirds of my hearers. Should such be their thoughts, I will reply to them.

With respect to myself, my efforts have been strenuously directed to ascertain what *I know*, to understand what *can be known*, and to encrease my *knowledge* as far as possible. In the next place, I have endeavoured to communicate my *knowledge* to my fellow creatures; and strictly laid down to myself the rule, never to speak to them of that of which I have *not* knowledge. If beyond the horizon of things seen—without the range of our earthly planet, and apart from the nature of our human race, any speculations should force themselves on my fancy, I keep them to myself, even as I do the dreams of my nightly sleep,

well satisfied that my neighbour will have his speculations and his dreams also, and that his, whatever they may be, will not coincide precisely with mine.

Satisfied by experience, no less than observation, of the advantage to be derived from this rule of practice, viz. to communicate with others only respecting my knowledge, and to keep to myself my belief, I venture to recommend the same to my fellow creatures; and, in conformity with this rule, would urge them, as soon as possible, to turn their churches into halls of science, and exchange their teachers of faith for expounders of nature. Every day we see sects splitting, creeds new modelling, and men forsaking old opinions only to quarrel about their opposites: I see three Gods in one, says the trinitarian, and excommunicates the socinian who sees a godhead in unity. I see a heaven but no hell, says the universalist, and disowns fellowship with such as may distinguish still less. "I see a heaven, and a hell also, beyond the stars," said lately the orthodox friend, and expelled his shorter sighted brethren from the sanctuary. I seek them both in the heart of man, said the more spiritual follower of Penn, and straightway builded him up another temple, in which to quarrel with his neighbor, who perhaps only employs other words to express the same ideas. For myself, pretending to no insight into these mysteries, possessing no means of intercourse with the inhabitants of other worlds, confessing my absolute incapacity to see either as far back as a first cause, or as far forward as a last one, I am content to state to you, my fellow creatures, that all my studies, reading, reflection, and observation, have obtained for me no knowledge beyond the sphere of our planet, our earthly interests, and our earthly duties; and that I more than doubt, whether, should you expend all your time and all your treasure in the search, you will be able to acquire



any better information respecting unseen worlds, and future events, than myself. Whenever you shall come to the same conclusion, you will probably think the many spacious edifices which rear their heads in your city, are somewhat misapplied, and the time of the individuals who minister therein somewhat misemployed: you will then doubtless perceive that they who wish to muse, or pray, had better do it after the manner designated by the good Jesus, namely, by entering their closet and shutting the door; and farther perceive, that the true bible is the book of nature, the wisest teacher he who most plainly expounds it, the best priest our own conscience, and the most orthodox church a hall of science. I look round doubtless upon men of many faiths, upon calvinists, unitarians, methodists, baptists, catholics, and I know not what beside, and yet, my friends, let us call ourselves by what names we will, are we not creatures occupying the same earth, and sharing the same nature? and can we not consider these as members of one family, apart from all our speculations respecting worlds, and existences, and states of being, for which, in ages past, men cut each other's throats, and for which they now murder each other's peace?

And now, if among my hearers there should be one, whose opinions I have too rudely jarred, or, worse, whose feelings I have wounded, more deeply than he will I lament the offence, and lament it the rather because of its necessity. Had your public teachers employed their twenty millions in shedding peace on earth, and knowledge among men, I had not been here to startle the flock nor alarm the shepherd; I had not stepped forth from the studies and retirement which I love, into a world distracted with dissension and profaned with vice; I had not thus ventured, and thus endured, in the cause of human reason,



happiness, and tranquillity, if the teacher had done his duty, and the people had grown wise under his tuition.

At our next meeting, I purpose to call your attention to a subject of vital importance. I purpose to develope with you that just rule of life, which no system of religion ever taught, or can ever teach; which exists apart from all faith, all creeds, and all written laws, and which can alone be found by following, with an open eye, a ready ear, and a willing heart, the steps of knowledge; by exercising the senses, faculties, and feelings, which appertain to our nature; and, instead of submitting our reason to the authority of fallible books and fallible teachers, by bringing always the words of all books and all teachers to the test of our reason.

## LECTURE V.

### MORALS.

IN my previous discourses I have chiefly labored to substantiate with you the nature of knowledge. The importance of the object may have led me to insist even to tediousness, on those primary truths which, once perceiving, the mind wonders could ever be unseen, and which, but for the errors inherent in our education, could never fail to be brought by the opening senses to the opening mind. But, as it is, our instincts supplanted, stifled, annihilated, instead of actively exercised, and widely guided; our faculties perverted, tortured, neglected; the most useful cramped or misled; the least useful unduly forced, prematurely exercised, and fed from a wrong source; our feelings led astray from the first moment of their blossoming; the canker of fear blighting their freshness, and visionary thoughts usurping the place of realities: nothing more difficult, sometimes more hopeless, than to awaken the mind to a perception of first principles, by simply calling on the eye to see, the ear to hear, all the senses to feel, and the understanding to admit, arrange, compare the facts so ascertained. Aware at once, both of the necessity and the difficulty of clearing the simple threshold of knowledge of the thorns and branches heaped on it, by unbridled imaginations; I ever hesitate in our progress to make a step in advance, without appealing to the first simple premises which we have so labored to establish.

At our last meeting, therefore, we carefully recapitulated the result of our previous observations, respecting the nature and the limits of the field of human enquiry; and, having first convinced ourselves of what real knowledge consists, we proceeded to try, by the test thus obtained, the reality of a subject which now absorbs the leisure, sways the feelings, and engulfs the surplus industry of mankind.

The result of these investigations, placed religion *without* the field of knowledge. Based upon assertion, hypothesis, tradition, we found it wanting in substantiated and ever enduring data to which the senses of each individual might appeal, and by which the faculties of each individual might be convinced. We remarked, that in consequence, no minds were agreed upon the matter; that while none disputed the truths of real science, consisting of *things known*, all disputed the lessons of religion, treating of things unknown, and things imagined. We remarked farther, that what is unreal in its nature, vague and ever varying in its lessons, could afford no safe guide to human reason, no just rule to human conduct; but that, on the contrary, all the experience supplied by tradition as well as by the observation of existing generations, combined to attest, that, so far from entrenching human conduct within the gentle barriers of peace and love, religion has ever been, and now is, the deepest source of contentions, wars, persecutions for conscience sake, angry words, angry feelings, backbitings, slanders, suspicions, false judgments, evil interpretations, unwise, unjust, injurious, inconsistent actions.

But shall we be told that these consequences are the result of false religions. Alas, my friends! and who has the true? Ask the Mahomedan, the Jew, the Pagan, the deist, the christian, in all his multiform varieties, under all his multiplied appellations—each has the right, all others possess the wrong. And where, among these contradictory



and confounding faiths, is one whose *ipse dixit* truths are compounded of facts; whose first premises are demonstrable to the human eye, the human ear, the human touch; whose proofs are sought and found in the nature of man and the nature of things, and whose conclusions are sanctioned by our own confirming sensations and assenting reason?

No, my friends! we have seen that no religion stands on the basis of *things known*; none bounds its horizon within the field of human observation; and, therefore, as it can never present us with indisputable facts, so must it ever be at once a source of error and of contention.

If, then, that which we have followed for a true light, be proved a meteor—if, instead of leading us into safe and pleasant paths, it have enticed us into swamps and quagmires—if, instead of informing the mind, warming and gladdening the heart, it have clouded and confounded the one, chilled and bruised the other, are we then without a guide in the path of life? Are our barks launched upon the ocean, without rudder or compass? Is there no star by which to steer, no rule-directed skill wherewith to trim our sails, and point an unerring course through the rocks and whirlpools of our passions and appetites, and the fogs and deceiving *mirage* of our deluding and deluded imaginations? Wo to man, should the answer be a negative! Wo to our race should we be—I say not without a rule, but without an *unerring* rule, by which to shape our course safely, steadily, usefully, happily, justly; by which to regulate our actions, frame our opinions, chasten our feelings, and render the term of our existence one of utility and delight! Were not this rule within our power to substantiate, idle were every other human enquiry; idle were every fact gathered in every science; yea, idle were all human researches if their results combined not to aid us

in the establishing of that golden rule, which conducts by one and the same path to virtue and happiness!

And what then is this rule? Where in the field of knowledge must we seek it? Under what science shall we find it written? In casting our eye over the table of just knowledge, we shall find the rule we seek, under the head of "MORALS"—it being the science of human actions or of human life.

In earlier ages, however removed from the simple view of things to which the clearer lights of physical science are now leading civilized man, we perceive him always to have had some general ideas respecting this important branch of human enquiry; nor, however it may administer to our vanity to believe the contrary, might we find upon minute investigation, that we have greatly advanced this science beyond the point to which the sages of Greece and Rome, or of Persia and China, had placed it before the date of our modern era. The cause of this remissness on our part, I conceive to be, that we have lost sight, even more than did the ancients, of the true basis of the science, and substituted one even more false than did the legislators of Greece or the patriots of Rome.

The usual motive principle in Athenian ethics, and invariably of Spartan and Latin virtue, was the good of country, but that good always more or less unwisely interpreted; military glory the means, and national greatness, instead of national happiness, the object. Still, if in something, or even in much, mistaken, the MORALS of the ancients was a soul-stirring science, encouraging a generous, if even an exaggerated forgetfulness of self, and calculated to form, as we read that it did form, commanding nations, and self-respecting men. Among the Athenian schools, indeed, were some models of practical virtue, and teachers of moral science, whose lessons and whose

lives seem to have equalled all that we can show in modern generations of good and wise. Such appears to have been the modest and benevolent Socrates: such, more especially, appears to have been the mild, unpre-suming, reasonable Epicurus, in whose ethics, as imperfectly conveyed to us, we find the science first based upon its just foundation—*the ascertained consequences of human actions.*

The moderns, whether we look to the numerous family of Christian nations, or to the equally numerous family who have followed the standard of Mohammed, have unfortunately based their morals upon their religion, or, where that was impracticable, have so mingled the truths of the science with the dogmas of the faith, that, while the vulgar mind has been unable to conceive of them as separate, even more enlightened minds, yielding to the force of education, have found it difficult not to conceive of them as related. The more effectually to detect the error of this persuasion, let us examine first what we understand by the term MORALS, and then what we understand by that of RELIGION. First, then, what is the meaning attached to the word MORALS. It is a word often in our mouths, and the first step towards acquiring a knowledge of any science, is to possess an accurate idea of the subject of which it treats, or of the meaning of the term employed for its designation.

What then is MORALS?

A rule of life.

How formed? from what deduced?

From the consequences of actions as ascertained through our sensations, and our observations of the sensations of others.

Actions which produce good, we call moral actions; actions which produce evil, immoral actions. Revolve the



matter as we may, we can come to no other rational conclusion. The word MORALS, then, is employed to designate a course of actions, whose effects are beneficial to ourselves and others. In other words, they constitute a rule of life drawn from the ascertained consequences of actions. The rule is simple. If we never look out of it, we can never go wrong in morals.

Let us now enquire what is RELIGION? We have seen what religion *is not*. Our present object will be to ascertain what *it is*, and thus to establish a correct definition of the word applicable to it, by whatever religious sect, in whatever country, employed.

Were each individual in this assembly to answer the question in turn, I am somewhat doubtful if there would be two who would agree in their replies. Some would place religion in the intellectual admission of certain dogmas; others, in that of dogmas directly opposed to the first enumerated. Others would see it in the observation of certain days, fasts, and festivals; some in certain prayers offered up in certain places; others in songs and hymns, or in meditations, and visions, and ablutions, and all manner of ceremonies. There are doubtless some present, who would say all external rules and abstract creeds are of no importance; and who would direct us to see religion in the just actions of men.

I wish you here to observe, that such religionists as the last mentioned, are in fact no *religionists* at all; they are only *good men*. Either religion is something distinct from morals, or it is the same thing. If it be distinct, what is it? I believe there is one definition which will embrace all religions, from the Laplander's to the Hottentot's; from those of this city, round the world, until we land here again in the same.

Religion, as distinguished from morals, may be defined

thus: *a belief in, and homage rendered to, existences unseen and causes unknown.* This definition will apply equally to the Hindoo, Mahomedan, Jew, Christian, pagan, theist, and every variety of religionist existing or imaginable. Of religion, as used to express a *just practice*, nothing can be said, but that it is a misapplication of terms. If religion mean good morals, let us call it good morals, that we may understand each other. I had occasion, during the course of our preliminary investigations on knowledge, to insist much on the importance of accurate language. Without it there can be no accurate ideas.

We perceive then that religion and morals are words bearing distinct significations. The one implies a mode of belief; the other a just mode of practice. These may indeed be occasionally conjoined, but there is no necessary relation between them; and I must request you to observe, that it is exceedingly difficult for them to be placed in contact, without the one, more or less, neutralizing the other. A necessary consequent of religious belief is the attaching ideas of merit to that belief, and of demerit to its absence. Now here is a departure from the first principle of true ethics. Here we find ideas of moral wrong and moral right associated with something else than beneficial action. The consequence is, we lose sight of the real basis of morals, and substitute a false one. Our religious belief usurps the place of our sensations, our imaginations of our judgment. We no longer observe effects; we lay down laws. We no longer look to actions, trace their consequences, and *then* deduce the rule; we first make the rule, and then, right or wrong, force the action to square with it.

But, methinks, I hear you observe—that Religion, if not the source, may be at least the coadjutor of virtue; if not the parent, she may be at least the companion. Far be it from me to say that such may not be—that such never



is. I have crossed in the path of life some lovely minds and lovely hearts, of which no harsh and narrow creed could mar the beauty ; and which could enfold in their own gentleness, and expand with their own warmth, the chilling and censorious faith, which drove less kindly natures to angry uncharitableness or morose fanaticism.

Religion I have observed to take its complexion from that of the bosom which harbours it. Where the disposition is gentle, its inmate will soften her temper, modify her doctrines, and sink to whispers the thunder of her denunciations. Where the character has more vigor, and firmness of purpose and ardent imagination unite with scrupulous conscientiousness, we find the ardent zealot and sincere fanatic ready to sacrifice life, friends, country, aye, and the whole human race on the altar of his idolatry, and to make his existence one long scene of denial to himself, and of infliction upon others. On such temperaments as the last adverted to, we perceive the most fatal effects of religion on the moral character of the man. Such as we have here depicted, should be the enlightened benefactors of their race ; the leaders of improvement, the firm defenders and fearless advocates of truth. Such would they be if led by wise guides into the field of real knowledge, and there taught by observation and experience, to base their opinions upon ascertained facts, and to seek in their own unsophisticated sensations, the rules of temperance, justice, toleration, and humanity. But led by error into the stony ground of religious faith, all the qualities of their noble nature are perverted to evil. Their eye no longer fixed on this world, nor their hearts on their fellow creatures, they are transformed into the enemies of true science, the scourgers of society, the persecutors of reason and of sane morality. It may be, as we have observed, that religion will borrow the fair robes of virtue, and speak



in the tones of love caught from lovely hearts, but never did she herself originate, however she may sometimes pervert to her own purposes, that human sympathy with human weakness, that gentle patience with human error, that untiring perseverance in the cause of human improvement, which the study of human nature, and acquaintance with the reforming; enlightening power of human knowledge, impart to the reflecting observer of the world without and of the world within.

Let us not mistake causes ! Let us not misconceive of effects ! Let us not so wrong the heart of man, as when we see the turbanned follower of Mohammed, invoking Allah, while he spreads the carpet for the weary traveller, and shares with him his bread—let us not, I say, so wrong the human heart, as to believe, that but for the written law of his Koran he would shut his door against the houseless, the friendless, and the hungry ; or that when he opens it, he obeys not a law nobler and purer than that cried by his priest from the minaret—even that which is entwined and incorporated with his being, and which teaches him to pity in others the wants which he feels within himself ! The simple African, whose desires are bounded by his grove of cocoa nuts and bread fruits, and whose superstitions extend not beyond the charms and whimsical ceremonies of nurses and conjurors over the bodies of the sick, yields his mat, and shares his fruits with the fainting white man whom the love of science, or the madness of superstition, leads to his peaceful hut ; and, unlearned in all of truth as of error, beyond what his simple experience has taught him, binds up the wounds of the suffering stranger, and lulls him to sleep with his pitying songs. Or, who that has visited the native sons of America's forest, where the vices of civilized and christian nations are yet unknown, but has eat of the venison prepared by the gentle squaw, where

there was no priest to bless, or written law to teach ; and farther seen the son of nature lay him down to his last sleep with the dignity of a mind which had followed virtue up to its knowledge, and knew as little to fear possibilities beyond the grave, as realities here.

And must we be told that unnerving fears and disgracing penalties are requisite to drive man into the path of virtue ? Must he be made a coward ere he can be innocent ? Must he be sold to folly ere he can be saved from crime ? Little have such moralists studied the latent powers inherent in our nature—the beautiful faculties and emotions which need but to be awakened and exercised, for us to distinguish good from evil, even as we distinguish pleasure from pain ! Little know they of the satisfaction imparted to the bosom by a course of gentle feeling and generous action ; little conceive they of the pain and disquiet consequent on feelings of uncharitableness and deeds of violence, who imagine temptations of heavenly rewards requisite to incline the well taught mind to the one, or threats of ugly fiends, and phantoms, and torments, first conceived and accurately realized in the earthly dungeons of Christian inquisitors, necessary to turn the human heart from the other.

Alas, my friends ! we have tampered with imaginary demons through all the ages of human ignorance up to the present hour—we have quailed the human heart with fear—we have shaken reason from her throne with the agues of superstition—we have broken down the self-respecting spirit of man with nursery tales and priestly threats, and we *dare* to assert, that in proportion as we have prostrated our understanding and degraded our nature, we have exhibited virtue, wisdom, and happiness, in our words, our actions, and our lives !

Time it is, that we awake to a better knowledge of things—a more just appreciation of our own powers and

capabilities, a more accurate observation of consequences and causes, and that we fit ourselves wisely to enjoy the life which is ours, and wisely to instruct the rising generation to avoid the errors which have led our minds astray, and to seek the truths which we have neglected.

Conceiving us, my friends, to have sufficiently discussed the tendency of those doctrines and assertions which were never made to stand an encounter with reason, we will now recal our attention to the consideration of the science which is to supply the unerring rule of human conduct.

Morals we defined to be *a rule of life drawn from the ascertained consequences of human actions*. You will observe that here, as in every other branch of knowledge, our own sensations, accurately observed, supply us with the facts of which the science is compounded.

Morals, thus considered, is a wide and spacious field; as spacious as human life and human action. There is a wrong and a right way of doing every thing; a wrong and a right way of feeling every thing; a wrong and a right way of saying every thing. We are therefore moral or immoral at every moment of our conscious existence.

What is required for the securing of our moral rather than our immoral state? Attention. Attention to the consequences of our actions; attention to the nature of our feelings; attention to the meaning, and the bearing, and the effects of our words. Look to these! Look around ye! Look within! Ye need no other rule; ye need no other law. Would ye ascertain what of your rules are just? Put them to this test. Examine where they run; what they hit, and what they miss. Trace them *through* all their consequences, *to* all their results. Believe not they are right *because they are your rules*, but test them by



the actions they produce, and these actions again by the simple good or evil of their results.

Permit me here to recapitulate a few observations presented at our last meeting. We then remarked, that had we only senses, each impression would disappear with the object which excited it; in which case, no knowledge, or accumulation of facts, could exist for us. But, having memory, we can retain each impression by whichsoever of our senses received; having judgment, we compare and arrange these impressions; having imagination, we ingeniously combine impressions, however removed as to time, distant as to place, or slightly assimilated by affinity or resemblance; and, having moral feelings or emotions, we consider all occurrences with a reference to the good or evil they may induce to our race.

In that most important branch of knowledge which we are now considering, all these properties of our nature are called into action. Our sensations supply the facts which our faculties treasure up and arrange; and, aided by our emotions, enable us to judge and to feel for others: out of which sympathy springs all the bright family of the virtues.

In considering the science of morals, it might seem, at the first glance, to divide itself into two distinct heads: as our conduct affects ourselves, and as it affects others. This distinction, however, is more apparent than real, since it is barely possible for us to consider any action, much less any course of actions, without a reference to their effects, either immediate or more remote, by example, on the sentient beings around us; which effects must ever again react upon ourselves, and influence, pleasurably or painfully, our state of being. Still are there some actions involving more peculiarly our own selfish interests; and upon which, in cases where no counter interest of others is presented, prudence,

or a just calculation of consequences to ourselves, may be allowed solely to decide. Such are the actions incidental to the gratification of the appetites appertaining to our nature. The rules by which to restrain these within just and healthy propriety are peculiarly simple; and, when carefully substantiated by observation, and habitually followed, supply us with the virtues of temperance and sobriety. Were the habit induced from infancy upwards, of closely observing all our sensations, and distinguishing the moment when healthy indulgence passes into unhealthy excess, there would not be (except in cases of defective organization) one being in existence afflicted with those unreasoned, self-tormenting habits, which are now, in vulgar parlance, more especially distinguished by the name of *vices*.

But let us here observe, that to secure for ourselves that seemly propriety which constitutes the rule of temperance, we must as little incline to the extreme of fanatical self-denial as to that of indulgence. We must govern and not crucify the appetites which, forming a part of our being, can as little be stifled as palled, without injury to our physical, moral, and mental health. It has been the requiring the annihilation instead of the just government of the human passions, which has nourished the belief, so slanderous to our nature, that they were beyond the control of our reason. Oh! let but reason be appealed to, and we shall acknowledge, for we shall see and feel her power!

In the day that reason shall be consulted, we shall study ourselves with a reference to the world about us; and that world again with a reference to ourselves; and, applying all external things wisely to their uses, apply also all our organs, physical and intellectual, wisely to theirs. Then may we find that the error lies not in our

nature, but in the false usages, opinions, laws, habits, and customs, which have originated in our ignorance and in the superstitions which that ignorance has engendered.

In considering our conduct with relation to the world, without us, we find the science under our immediate review associated with every other ; extending its ramifications through the whole field of knowledge, turning to profit every fact drawn from the rich stores of nature, and calming and expanding the human heart in proportion as the human mind becomes enlightened.

The sciences have ever been the surest guides to virtue, because, demanding calm observation, obtaining all their results by means of dispassionate investigation, they bring into action our noblest faculty, the judgment, and submit the imagination to its guidance; dispose us by the previous accurate observation of things to an equally accurate observation of men, and, confirming us in the habit of tracing effects to causes in the world without, prepare us to follow attentively the train of occurrences in the world within.

In seeking that principle of our nature which leads the heart of man to sympathise with that of his fellow ; to extend the hand in succor, or to drop the tear in sympathy, philosophers have strangely disputed. But, without adverting to the various arguments and speculations which have more frequently tended to confuse the intellect than to develop the fact, we may remark, that the many who have agreed in referring all our noblest actions and most beautiful feelings to the single desire of attaining our own individual good, present, at the least, an immutable basis of morals ; since even self-love and self-interest, rightly understood, would always lead to justice, beneficence, gentleness, truth, candor, and indulgent toleration. And such doubtless is the truth. A simple but accurate calculation



of selfish consequences, would lead invariably to the cultivation of every amiable feeling, and practice of every action beneficial to society. For, as we have previously enquired, how come we at a knowledge of virtue? By our sensations. What constitutes moral good? A course of actions producing beneficial results. What moral evil? A course of actions whose results are injurious. Now most true it is, as I trust the experience of each and all of us can testify, that never does the human breast throb with purer delight, than when man has been instrumental to the happiness of his fellow man. The pleasure derived from any selfish enjoyment dies with the immediate sensation; but that shared with others, or that imparted to others, even with temporary loss or inconvenience to ourselves, will live in the memory to the latest period of existence, and thrill the bosom with pleasure each time it is recalled. Certain it is, therefore, that the pursuit of our own happiness would alone suffice to induce the cultivation of that tone of thinking and feeling, which tends to promote that happiness. But we have still something within us, better than any process of reasoning, which prompts us to spring forward to the relief of suffering; and which we have only to cultivate, in conjunction always with the cultivation of our judgment, (or we may sadly err) to become the active and enlightened friends of our race. When, having distinguished beneficial from injurious actions, in the consequences resulting to ourselves, and observed similar effects to result from similar actions to others, we distinguish an emotion within us, varying indeed in strength in each individual, which prompts to the conferring of benefits to our brother man, and even, occasionally, to the preferring of his advantage to our own. In this preference of others to self, or, to put it according to the views of the moralists before quoted, *in this seeking of our own plea-*

sure through the pleasure of others, consists the highest degree of active virtue.

Great is the difference between what I have here denominated *active virtue*, and what we may call *negative virtue*—albeit, in the present, unfortunate state of society, we are often but too happy when we find the latter, and have not to encounter *active mischief*.

By the negatively virtuous, I understand those who, regulating judiciously their passions and appetites with a view to their own healthy existence, and forbearing from all words and actions which might disturb their tranquillity by attracting the hostility of others, yet are deficient in that generous sensibility to the feelings of others, which we have distinguished as the source of active virtue; and which dictates the ready sacrifice of selfish enjoyment, whenever such sacrifice will purchase a greater enjoyment to a fellow creature, or stimulates to voluntary exertions in favor of suffering, or in the cause of human improvement.

This cultivated sensibility, variously called by philosophers the moral principle, emotion, faculty, or sympathy, and in the figurative language of Friends, *the light within*, *the spirit of truth*, or *God within the breast*, may, I think, be distinguished by every self observer, as existing apart from the purely intellectual powers, though always demanding their guidance. When not under the guidance of our noblest intellectual faculty, the judgment, it may place ourselves, and involve others, in the worst difficulties; when under the direction of a well-balanced and discriminating intellect, it leads to every good, and constitutes a man of virtue.

Now the object of all education should be, the active developement and cultivation of the generous emotion we are now considering, and which is but too often allowed to remain dormant in the bosom, until it is absolutely choked



and annihilated by vicious examples and equally vicious lessons. First comes false parental indulgence, teaching the young creature to seek its little pleasures at expense of the comfort and convenience of others, by passionate cries and obstinate peevishness; to seek them, too, without a reference to its companions and playmates, if not often at their cost. Next comes erroneous instruction, to frighten the opening mind from innocent truth, to unfit it for observation of the interesting realities around it, and to poison the sweet pleasures of its age, by tales of unseen things and revengeful beings—these also armed, like their earthly governors, with whips and scourges. Then comes worldly policy, with selfishness, censoriousness, and avarice, in her train, to perfect an education whose motive principle is FEAR, and whose fruits are hard-heartedness and hypocrisy!

What, my friends! and do we charge to our organization what springs from our ignorance of its powers! Do we libel the nature of man, while we are violating instead of guiding its instincts, perverting its faculties, and feeding it with error instead of truth? That which we sow, must we reap. The infant mind is a virgin soil. While we plant tares, shall we gather tares. While, in pursuit of things unseen and causes unknown, we waste our surplus time and our surplus industry, and while we neglect or pervert the powers of the human mind, must idleness and error, with their offspring, violence and profligacy, distract and afflict all the nations of the earth!

But let us adopt measures for wisely developing and directing the faculties which distinguish our nature. Let us seek out patient and enlightened guides, instead of angry and dogmatical teachers, who will encourage the lively observation of childhood, foster its better feelings, remove from its eye, and its ear, and its imagination, all that can awaken unkindly emotions, impart painful sensations,



provoke angry passions, suggest false ideas, and judiciously surround it with such impressions as shall turn all its faculties to good.

To prepare such a system of education for the young, we must begin with ourselves. We must purge our own hearts of evil, and our own minds of error, ere we can distinguish those just rules of conduct, which, as parents, as citizens, as human beings, it is our common duty and common interest to discover for the rising generation.

In this imperfect discourse, I have but sketched the outline and laid down the first principles of that beautiful science, of which all others should be but the handmaidens, to which the whole field of knowledge should lend its accumulated facts, and a succession of enlightened generations supply their accumulated experience.

My object here, as in all our previous investigations, has been to elucidate the simple nature of the science. To show that its truths are discoverable by observation, and supplied by our sensations; that all lessons which depart from the premises of our sensations, are but idle declamation; that the seeds of all excellence are within ourselves—that is, in the senses and the faculties which enlighten and adorn our nature; that the source of all vice is ignorance, and that of virtue, knowledge; that the field of human enquiry is the world we inhabit; the field of human duty that of human action; the only rational pursuit of human beings that of human happiness; that happiness, to be experienced by *any*, must be shared by *all*; that the real interests of the whole human family are one, even as their nature is in itself the same; that comprising in our being physical, moral, and intellectual organs, it is only in and by the judicious exercise of all these organs that we can secure to ourselves the health of any; that unless our limbs and muscles be exercised, our whole frame

must be weak or diseased; unless our intellectual faculties be fairly developed and exercised, we cannot regulate wisely our passions or our actions, and unless all our sensibilities be wisely cultivated and regulated, we can never experience that highest enjoyment proceeding from the practice of active virtue, which we have seen to flow from a ready sympathy in the wants and feelings of others.

I shall now close our investigations by the remark, that MORALS, OR THE SCIENCE OF HUMAN LIFE, may, for better convenience, and with a view to the presenting in order all the relations it involves, be divided into several heads.

These divisions may, in some cases, be rather supplied by existing errors than by inherent truths. It being indispensable, however, in the actual state of society, to develope all truth with a reference to existing error, I purpose, as leisure and my more regular engagements may permit, to consider the conduct of human beings under the three great relations in which we may observe them to stand.

First. *Their relation to each other, and to the mass.* This will embrace a review of all our duties, public and private. It will lead us also to inspect the principles of national government, law, and social economy.

Secondly. *The mutual relation of the two sexes;* in which we shall be called upon to examine the principles that should direct the social intercourse of men and women.

Thirdly. *The relation of the old to the young; of the existing to the rising generation, viewing us in the character of human beings, free born, and self-governing.* Also, *the relation of parents to children;* examining *the duties and responsibilities of the being who gives life to the being who receives it.* This will lead to the discussion of the important subject of education, and elicit suggestions respecting a plan of national education. Until some



measures shall be adopted for the judicious and equal instruction and protection of every son and daughter born to the Republic, ye cannot be (as I conceive) Republicans. Until exclusive colleges, paltry common schools, ignorant sunday schools, and sectarian churches, be replaced by state institutions, founded by a general tax, and supported by the same, (so long as it shall be necessary—that is, till the well regulated industry of the children shall meet the expenses of their education;) and until, in these national institutions, the child of your Governor shall be raised with the child of your farmer, and the child of your President with that of your mechanic, ye cannot be (as I conceive) Republicans. And farther, until ye have good libraries and good teachers of elementary science in all your towns, for the mental improvement of the existing generation, and popular halls of assembly, where all adults may meet for the study and discussion of their social and national interests, as fellow creatures and fellow citizens, ye cannot be (as I conceive) Republicans.

To attempt the satisfactory developement of the important subjects to which I have here alluded, it would be necessary for us to meet under other circumstances than those at present existing. On my part would be necessary, the conviction that I was devoting my time and labor, not to satisfy the unmotivated and momentary curiosity of a public indifferent to its noblest interests, but that I was employed with and for a public anxious to substitute knowledge for error, and virtue for superstition.

To inspire that conviction in me, would be necessary on your part some active measures, for which the desire or the courage, or both, may be at present wanting.

For the time being, I shall confine my exertions to the simple elucidation of the first principles of the science; to the sketching of that great outline within which all truth



must be sought, and where, I trust, you may yet be induced to seek it. To complete the general survey in which we are considerably advanced, I shall endeavor, at our next meeting, to elicit the nature of opinions, and the manner of their formation: with a view to the correction of that spirit of proselytism, which now transforms us all into angry combatants, for each whimsey of our brain, and of that spirit of censoriousness, which is now ever interfering with the mental liberty and moral peace of society, and rendering the life of man one continued scene of strife and of hypocrisy.

It is my duty to inform you that the present meeting will be the last of the course of lectures on the subject of the mind, and that the next will be devoted to the subject of the passions, and the manner of their formation. I shall endeavor to elicit the nature of opinions, and the manner of their formation, with a view to the correction of that spirit of proselytism, which now transforms us all into angry combatants, for each whimsey of our brain, and of that spirit of censoriousness, which is now ever interfering with the mental liberty and moral peace of society, and rendering the life of man one continued scene of strife and of hypocrisy.

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LECTURE VI.

FORMATION OF OPINIONS.

THE subject to which I shall call your attention this evening, THE FORMATION OF OPINIONS, is one of the utmost practical importance; one which thoroughly understood, would remove uncharitableness from the heart of man, and shed the placid rays of peace and truth upon the path of life.

For eighteen centuries and upwards, the nations styled civilized, have waged a war of opinion, dying the altars of their faith with each other's blood, or, in their gentlest mood, in this freest country, and in this (compared with all the past) enlightened age, judging in severity, sentencing in bitterness, and persecuting, by angry word and oppressive deed, each his fellow creature. For eighteen centuries and upwards; sword and fire, chains, dungeons, tortures, threats and curses, or (scarcely less severe) public scorn and private censure, the falling back of friends and setting on of foes, the whisperings of detraction, the surmises of folly, the misapprehensions and misrepresentations of ignorance, have conspired to wreak vengeance upon the mind and body of man, constraining the sacrifice, impossible to force, of honest opinion, and commanding the assent to truth or error, as it may be, of that noblest property of our being—even our free-born intellect. For eighteen centuries and upwards, the human family, estranged from each other, albeit pinned within the fold of

one faith, have striven in deadly feud like the fierce beasts in the Roman arena, or like the iron knights of crusading chivalry within the fatal lists of cruel ordeal, where *might* alone did constitute *the right*, and the fall of the weak substantiated the justice of the strong.

Such, to look no farther than the date of the modern era, hath been the fate of the nations. The weak have been trampled on, the bold in spirit have been crushed, the conscientious have been martyred, the honest have been silenced, the stigmatized for liberty, mercy and charity have been hunted through the earth by the bloodhounds of superstition, until the heart of philanthropy hath drooped even to despair, and the hope of philosophy in a better and fairer future hath given way. Such droopings and faintings must have been experienced by every generous mind, when, in contemplating the face of society, it loses sight of the generating cause of the evil which it mourns; and, again, when it ceases to compare the present with the past, and so marks not the slow and silent progress of our race from the foul night of barbarous ignorance towards the fulness of civilizing knowledge. But let us clearly distinguish the cause, and we may hasten the application of the remedy; let us trace the advance already made and now making, and we may calculate with cheerful confidence on our future destinies.

Persecution for opinion is the master vice of society. It was this raised the gloomy walls and dug the foul caverns of the Inquisition. It was this invented the rack, and the wheel, and the faggot, and the death-pang, and the dungeon, where the Moor, and the Jew, and the philosopher, and the suspected heretic expired, unpitied, unremembered, before thanksgiving, heaven-invoking bigotry. It was this butchered the simple Waldenses, in the valleys of their mountains. It was this mowed down the Hugue-



nots in the palace of the Gallic king. It was this dyed the rivers of either Indies with the blood of their peaceful children. It was this reared the horrid pile round the gentle Servetus, by the hand of presbyterian Calvin. It was this drove from their native isle the forefathers of this nation ; and it has been, and yet is, the same scourger of human peace, and bridler of human liberty, PERSECUTION FOR OPINION, which ruffles the whole surface of this fair republic, nurtures the harsh spirit and pride of sectarianism, hardens the heart of man towards his brother, sours the disposition of woman, and drops gall and aloes into the cup of human life. Surely, then, are we called, in our character of reasoning beings, to pierce to the source of this poisonous fountain of woe ! Surely then, are *ye* doubly called, in your character of a self-governing people, to arrest the flow of its deadly waters, and to seek the ways and the means for refreshing the land with the soft dews of love !

In developing the cause of the vice to which we have reference, we must first examine what *an opinion is* ; establish the meaning of the word, and the nature of the intellectual state it is employed to designate.

The chief aim of my previous efforts, in this place, has been directed to the attaining a just apprehension of the nature of knowledge. The result of those elementary enquiries, I conceive to be present to your minds. Now, as we established knowledge to be an accumulation of facts, so are all just opinions, intellectual conclusions drawn from those facts. It follows, therefore, that exactly in proportion to the extent and accuracy of our knowledge must be the justice of our opinions ; and *vice versa*, that in equal proportion to our remissness in collecting, and carelessness in weighing, examining, comparing, and arranging facts, must be the error of our opinions. Here

— then we see ignorance, or the absence of facts from the mind, to be the primary cause of all error.

I must now call your attention to a very curious inconsistency in human feeling. Men are seldom disposed to be angry with each other on account of the more or less knowledge they may possess, while they are incessantly angry with the varying opinions, which are as necessarily consequents upon this varying knowledge, as we conceive light or darkness to be upon the rising or setting of the sun. That one should know more than another appears simple and pardonable; but, that one knowing more, should think differently from others, is stamp'd for a mortal offence, without hope of pardon or benefit of clergy. The absurdity of applying the torture to the physiological anatomist, who should simply discover such and such to be the structure of our corporeal machine, would appear too gross for the human imagination, and yet the no less gross absurdity of resenting the conclusions generated by his discoveries appears to it quite facile of admission. The facts themselves, if deprived of all their consequences and so of all their utility, would be tolerated, but let them generate, as they must inevitably generate, their own conclusions in the mind, and the unfortunate explorer of science is hunted down by the dogs of persecution. When the observations of Lawrence associated the phenomena of life, thought, and motion, inseparably with the living, thinking, and moving organs of our frame, instantly awoke the cry of Infidel! Sceptic! Materialist! Atheist! As if with these unmeaning words, which those who employ usually understand no more than did Aristotle the rules of his own logic or the causes of the influent and refluent tides—as if, I say, by these unmeaning words, coupled with insulting vituperations, we could overthrow nature herself, annihilate the facts in her own bosom, or



stifle the conclusions which the inspection of those facts necessitate in the perceiving mind. When the enquiring Galileo observed that the phenomena of the celestial bodies, substantiated the motion of the planets in lieu of that of the sun, why was he dragged before the tribunal of death? Because the facts he proclaimed started in the mind of bigotry itself the inevitable conclusion, that if he was right, the astronomy of the Jews was wrong; and that, "Sun, stand thou still," argued an error in the pen that wrote, or in the voice that spake. And we may farther ask, why in these or our own times, why at the present hour, if a bold enquirer unclasp the book of knowledge, and simply proclaim its simple truths, the trump of alarm sounds throughout the land, and threats, outrage, and abuse, are heaped even on the head of a woman? Why, but because the facts which she, strong in her love to man, has the courage to reveal, generate in the minds of her very opponents conclusions inimical to existing systems and existing expenditures, and proclaim aloud to the teacher as well as the scholar, the clergy as well as the people, the designing as well as the ignorant, that if knowledge be true, superstition is false, and that if enquiry be prosecuted, church and hierarchy must fall!

But in discovering the propelling motives of this inconsistency, the inconsistency remains the same. Unless we can annihilate facts themselves, how can we annihilate the conclusions, that is, the opinions, which those facts suggest? When we employ our eyes, and when we see, or when we stretch forth our hand, and when we feel, must we not acknowledge the presence of the objects before us, and can we resist the intellectual assent which follows upon their perception?

Whenever, then, we hear an opinion startling from its novelty, what, in modesty, should we say? "Perhaps the



individual is possessed of facts which have not fallen under our observation, or attracted our attention. Let us enquire of him what they are, and then examine the facts for our selves." And what upon such a course of proceeding would be the result? One of three consequences. Either we should find the opinion corroborated by facts, in which case it would be true, and compel our own minds to its admission; or it would appear insufficiently substantiated by facts, in which case we should leave it for doubtful; or we should find it in contradiction with facts, in which case we should discard it for spurious.

But now, in any or all of these cases, what rational ground can we find for anger against the individual who may think otherwise than we think? He is right; he is credulous; he is wrong. What then? If he be right, it is for us to agree with him; if credulous, we are not obliged to be the same; if wrong, he is mistaken—and, in so far as this may be a source of evil, the loss must be to him. For that he thinks as he thinks, and as we think not, it is convincing that some evidence is present to his mind which is not present to ours; and, albeit upon examination we should pronounce that evidence false, so long as it exist in his mind for true, must he think as he thinks. And shall we stigmatize his honest opinion for a crime? By treating him as a felon we may indeed force him into hypocrisy, but cannot convince his understanding. To do the latter, we must present some other and better evidence to his mind—some incontrovertible facts, out of which a more correct opinion may arise. Opinions are not to be learned by rote, like the letters of an alphabet, or the words of a dictionary. They are conclusions to be formed, and formed by each individual in the sacred and free citadel of the mind, and there enshrined beyond the arm of law to reach, or force to shake; ay! and beyond the right of im-

pertinent curiosity to violate, or presumptuous arrogance to threaten. Alas, for consistency! Alas, for reason and happiness! Hath man fought and bled for political liberty, and will he violate the liberty of the mind? When he has broken the bars and bolts of corporeal dungeons, will he essay to clip and stretch the thoughts of his fellow beings to the measure of his own? Must all see just as far and no farther than we see? If this be civil liberty, better the wild freedom of the wild hunter! Nay, better the honest slavery of oriental despotism, where at least the wretch is warned to choose between unmuttering obedience and the bow-string!

I speak warmly, my friends, for truly my heart is moved in the cause of that holy principle, whose name is on every lip, on every badge, on every coin of the land, but whose vital spirit is profaned in our high places and our private ways, in house and chamber, in book and converse, in hall and church, and oh, more than all profaned in the secret heart of man!

Could we but obliterate all the false lessons imbibed during a pernicious education—could we but arrive at the perception of those primitive truths, which it is now the object, because the interest, of all our teachers to stifle—could we but engage in the investigation of the operations of our own intellect—could we understand the nature of an opinion, and the manner of its formation, never could we be guilty of persecution for the involuntary conclusions of the mind.

And yet simple ignorance, as we have seen, is not the only cause of the irrational anger elicited by the varying opinions of men. Ignorance, unbacked and unspurred, would not suffice to breed such tempests in the human bosom as we see engendered against so gentle, so unintentional an offence as a difference in opinion. The un-



tutored Indian lifts not his tomahawk against his brother because he thinks not with him respecting the attributes of their Great Spirit, or the nature of their expected hunting ground in the shadowy world of the dead. No! ignorance of the powers of the human mind will not alone explain the existence of the deadly evil, albeit knowledge of those powers would suffice to dispel it.

The unhappy circumstances which combined to organize a system of instruction in speculations of faith instead of objects of knowledge, and to set apart a body of men for the express purpose of expounding inexplicable creeds, and chaining the intellects of their hearers down to written points of doctrine, unintelligible mysteries and verbal quibbles, first originated the monstrous absurdity and lamentable evil to which we have reference. Were it not absolutely made the occupation of a part of the community to set the rest by the ears, never could human beings have disputed for ages, and shed rivers of blood, for establishing and protecting the dogma of a Trinity in Unity, predestination to salvation or damnation, the divine presence or absence in a wafer of bread or the liquor in a wine cup, the saving efficacy of the sign of the cross, or the sprinkling of cold water on the forehead of an infant. Never could they have wasted their lives and their treasure in squabbles about hair-drawn distinctions in fantastic ideas and unimportant possibilities, had not the custom been originated of employing *teachers of opinions*, instead of *teachers of facts*.

That we have here suggested the main cause of the irrational disputes which up to this hour have corroded the peace of society, is abundantly substantiated by observation, and corroborated by history.

In whatever country there has existed a priesthood, *there* opinionative persecution has prevailed, and there, and



there only, has the popular superstition been profaned by blood, expiatory atonements, and never slumbering opinionative dissensions.

Let us look back to Egypt, to India, to Judea, to Carthage, to Greece, to Rome—in all, tradition presents us with a priesthood, and exactly in proportion to the power of that priesthood, with less or more of religious butcheries or opinionative persecutions. We find the same, in a ratio exactly proportionate to the power of the priesthood, among all Christian nations; while among savages, however ignorant, or even in their ignorance revengeful, but whom we find without religious teachers, the popular superstition is ever harmless. Witness the gentle South Sea Islander, or the fierce Indian of this Northern hemisphere, whose faith, simple in itself, and entirely devoid of ceremonial, has never once been found a cause of war, or even of dissention; while in Mexico, when first explored by the Spaniards, the blood of victims streamed from altars sanctified by officiating ministers, whose butcheries only ceased, to give place to those of their Christian conquerors.

And among ourselves, my friends, what feeds the angry spirit which is abroad? Even that which first originated it among men: the exalting the dreams of our ignorance into a science; the setting apart times and places for its especial study, and the ordaining a body of men to propound its mysteries, and to protect them from the power of that principle which is inherent alike in matter and in mind—improvement. Let us leave Religion to herself, and she will work no evil. Let us leave her single and alone, without the adjunct of priest or temple, to measure weapons with knowledge. If true, she will stand; if false, she will fall. Let us store the human mind with the truths of science; and, whatever opinions these may

confirm or may generate, neither time nor changes, power, wealth, violence nor corruption, the vicissitudes of fortune, nor the fall of empires, can overthrow.

I have already attempted to show that an opinion, properly so called, is a conclusion of the mind, spontaneously elicited upon the admission of facts, or upon the admission of evidence which it receives for fact. On the accuracy of the evidence received must then depend the accuracy of the opinion elicited therefrom. Wheresoever we are in possession of facts, well examined, well substantiated, arranged, and compared, are our opinions just; whenever we receive for fact what is not fact, or whenever we are careless in our examination of facts, must our opinions be erroneous.

But how are we to designate those states of the mind, when in the absence of all facts, and all evidence, it is tortured to receive ideas? Ideas they cannot be called, for these are suggestions derived from sensations. Opinions they cannot be called, for these are conclusions spontaneously elicited by evidence. The teacher who begins by essaying to instil opinions, attempts an impossibility. He may engraft prejudices, suggest fantasies, distort the feelings, put the mind in confusion, but he cannot *teach opinions*.

Oh, when will men perceive what it is possible to impart, and desirable to acquire? When will they look to KNOWLEDGE as the subject matter of instruction, and dropping its pleasant truths in the fertile soil of the mind, leave OPINIONS to spring up themselves, as the plant from the seed!

But, look ye, my friends! what are ye or your agents now labouring to teach, not in your own land only, but in the remotest regions of the globe? Opinions. About what are ye disputing yourselves, and essaying to make



all tribes and nations dispute? Opinions. For what pour ye forth your treasures? For what endow seminaries and churches? For what plant spies and eves-droppers in every establishment, charitable, philosophical, or humane, founded in your cities? For what are the gentle and the wise driven from superintendence in your jails, your bridewells, your houses of refuge, your asylums, your schools? For what all this but for opinions.

But ye will say, "It is not *we*, it is not we, the people—it is the Clergy, it is the American Jesuit, it is more than all, the Presbyterian." With permission, my friends, but it *is* you—it *is* the people. Why give ye the rein to ambition? Why gold to rapacity? Why stay ye not the strife of tongues, the battle for supremacy, the fever of proselytism, the *persecution for opinions*? True, the teacher hath led the way. True, the false shepherd hath beguiled you. But when ye see the error of the path, will ye not tread back your steps? Will ye madly drive on when your eyes are open to the pit and your ears warned of destruction?

But say that ye be willing to foster strife within your own borders—under what plea, by what right, by what authority, scatter ye its seeds in lands not yours, among people neither acknowledging your supremacy, nor subject to your laws? I will not follow your missions across Atlantic and Pacific, athwart other zones, and one half of the world's meridians, to the banks of Senegal and Ganges; I will not track your emissaries to the Isles of the Southern Sea, and note the peace of their simple children profaned by dogmas, and their innocence by intoxicating liquors. I will not look beyond the borders of this Union, nor will I invoke other testimony than that supplied by the native sons of the land. I will summon my witnesses and your accusers from the deep forests of the Mobile, the sweet



springs of the pleasant Yazoo, and the shores of your own fresh water seas. I will call upon the Creek and the Choctaw, the Cherokee and the Seneka, to denounce the folly and mischief of your emissaries, and the madness of your zeal. Or it shall suffice, to array against ye the words of the venerable chief, the expostulations of the father of his people, who in this city, so lately, in the ears of its citizens, denounced the intriguing spirit, the feud-breeding faith, the *honey-lipped* but *bitter-hearted* hypocrisy (I employ his own epithets) of your proselytizing missionaries. Oh, when ye afflict strange people and other races with the curse which rests upon yourselves—when, despite their expostulations, and presuming upon your power, ye add the feuds of opinions to the hatred of tribes, and send forth retailers of spirituous and spiritual poison to the dusky children of nature—Oh, think well of the liberty ye outrage, the rights of nations that ye violate, the awful responsibility that ye assume !

Could ye send to your red brethren peaceful instructors in the useful arts of life, enlightened observers of nature, respecters of human feeling, who, without questioning their reverence for the benign spirit whose presence they acknowledge in the heart, would travel with them in peace the paths of life, and exchange with them all the offices of human love ; could ye send to the feeble remnant of that race, whose decay has been the price of your greatness, such instructors as these, ye might cancel the remembrance of injury, and preserve in your bosom a happy relic of a people, interesting from your own history, their character, and their wrongs. But, until such ye can send, (and, alas, such how rare!) oh, my friends, *send not at all*.

Another remark here suggests itself ; that as in the existing state of human knowledge, an uncommon opinion is

always unpopular, so does it afford strong evidence of the honesty of the individual who expresses it.

If the observations now presented, in conjunction with our previous investigations, should have satisfied you of the involuntary birth of opinions in the mind, the impossibility of changing opinions but by supplying other and stronger evidence than that which generated the existing opinions, and the impossibility of teaching opinions as we teach words to a parrot, you will perceive the absurdity, no less than the injustice, of all displeasure on account of the intellectual conclusions generated in our fellow-creatures, and the equal absurdity of devoting your time and money to the acquisition and propagation of opinions, instead of the acquisition and propagation of facts. You will admit also, I think, that an honest opinion, even when erroneous, merits always the respect of a good mind, and that an uncommon opinion merits always the investigation of an enquiring mind.

These considerations will appear to you of the highest moral importance should you examine, as it is your duty to examine, the harsh feelings and ungentle dealings springing daily and hourly out of intolerance and censoriousness. Lamentably has the list of the human virtues been curtailed by our inobservancy of the occurrences passing around us, our inattention to the effects of our words and actions on the happiness of our fellow beings, our ignorance of the powers of our own minds, and our indifference to the gentle dictates of human sympathy. While our thoughts have been wandering in the limbo of theological speculations, our eyes have been prying with impious curiosity into those of our neighbor, our lips have been outraging the liberty of man, by challenging his right to the utterance of his opinions, and so perverted has been our reason, so corrupted our hearts, that while

thus engaged in murdering our own peace, and the peace of others, we have called our censoriousness by the name of virtue, and sanctified our orthodox intolerance by the name of religion. Alas! when shall we see that our business is with our *own* doings, our *own* feelings, our *own* opinions; and that with a view to the formation of the one, and the regulation of the other, we must patiently observe all things, and gently hear all things, even that we may be fitted in all things to choose that which is best!

One observation, not without its practical importance, yet occurs to me on the subject of opinions. While our first duty is correctly to form our own, it is doubtless our farther duty to assist in the formation of those of others. How this may alone be done we have seen; namely, by presenting facts to the mind; in other words, by organizing a plan of uniform and universal instruction in all the branches of positive knowledge, by which means all men, being gradually put in possession of the same correct evidence, may be gradually led to the formation of just and coinciding opinions.

It needs not to ask if such a consummation be desirable. It needs not to ask if disputing and quarrelling be advantageous or agreeable. It needs not to ask if the employment of twenty millions per annum in feeding sectarian jealousies, bitter feelings, persecuting creeds, and contradictory conclusions, be injudicious or profitable. I care not what opinions or what fantasies we profess, I care not under what standard we have ranged ourselves—I care not how ignorant or how positive we may be in our errors, still am I persuaded that *all*, however differing as to the point of union, are agreed that union would be desirable. All? Said I that *all* are agreed? Yes, all; save those who live by existing divisions and confusion.

But it will be asserted, in the present confused state of



the human intellect, that, however desirable, what we have suggested is impossible. We shall be told that men can never agree in opinion. They certainly never can, until they understand *what an opinion is, and what knowledge is*; then will they perceive how, when we shall be all informed in the knowledge of things, and shall consent to restrict our enquiries within the range of our observation, we must all agree in the other.

I know we shall be asked tauntingly, whether we expect all men to become philosophers. Certainly not all those now living, and *most* certainly few of those who put the question. Generations may pass away ere, even in this comparatively free country, all men attain to their birth-right equal privileges of instruction. I incline not to gigantic hopes respecting our cotemporaries. Much they certainly may do. Much more I wish them to do. And though it be ill planting the best seed in the summer and autumn of life, and though the spring time be put in our own minds, could we but learn sufficient to remove some weeds, and but to lop away that one poisonous wide-spreading tree of evil, *persecution for opinion*, the paths of life, even in our day, might be made smooth, and the children of men travel through them in peace.

Nor should we omit to notice one fact, sufficient if observed, even in the absence of all other knowledge, to turn men from the idle warfare in which they are engaged. Let us look to the consequences of persecution. Did it ever convince? did it ever convert? Violence indeed may overthrow empires, may slaughter nations, may assassinate individuals, may harrass the mind, crucify the feelings, but it cannot controvert opinions. Persecution will suffice even to establish error, and hath ever proved omnipotent in advancing truth. They who have recourse to it are blind to all facts, blind to the noblest principle

of our nature, to the strongest instinct in all sentient existence. Where doth violence not provoke resistance from the lowest animal up to man? Wound the bear, and he will turn on the hunters; press on the noble stag, and he will give battle to his murderers; nay! injure the gentle and faithful dog, and we find the spirit of the lion.

And is it man—man, strong in every noble energy, powerful in every faculty, rich in all the resources, and sublime in all the dignity of intelligence—is it man whom we would frighten into tame surrender of his loftiest powers? whom we would cudgel out of his own free thoughts, and crush under the chariot-wheels of intolerance? Let us look into past history—let us mark on the human mind, through all ages, in all nations, the effects of persecution. When the justice of Aristides turned admiration to envy, what restored him to the love of his countrymen? Persecution. When the lessons of Socrates fell powerless on the giddy ears of the Athenians, what graved his name and his precepts on their hearts? His death by persecution. What revenged all the patriots of Rome of a misguided multitude? Persecution. And what rooted Christianity in the hostile soil of heathenism? Persecution. What fostered the heresy of Luther? Persecution. What built up the church of Calvin? Persecution. What hath given a substance and a name to all the distinctions, real or imagined, of each religious reformer? Persecution. What hath preserved the Jew pure and entire in his faith, in his blood, in ceremony and feature, through ages of time, and while lost and scattered amidst nations opposed in every custom, law, feeling and creed? Why hath he stood a noble monument of patient endurance, conscientious pertinacity, scrupulous fidelity, long-suffering and uncomplaining, yet unyielding resistance? Why, like a column in the desert, wearing its capital and its tracery and

all the form and ornament stamp by the genius of forgotten artists and forgotten nations, stands he to this hour a wondrous relic of empire departed and grandeur overthrown? Why, but because of persecution?

Or, say again, what hath provoked vengeance on the head of kings? What hurried English Charles to the scaffold? What threw down the royalty and nobility of France from their antique thrones, and long established supremacy? Or, yet once more, what turned the people from the prostituted name of liberty and the insignia of a republic dropping with gore, to reconcile them again to detested sceptres and the name and style of king? And, oh say, people of America! descendants of English Puritans, French Huguenots, Irish catholics, condemned regicides, outlawed patriots, and sanctified martyrs! what, driving your fathers from European realms, hath built up the noble frame of this republic? Oh say, torturers of the human mind! what hath done this save persecution?

And will ignorance never cease from troubling, and error never be at rest? Will persecution take her stand even at the fane of freedom, denouncing alike socinian, universalist, Jew, sceptic, and philosopher, yea! denouncing every profession, employment, discovery and recreation which squares not with the rule of orthodoxy, or diverts dollars from its treasury?

I point here to no particular sect; I point here to no individuals: I point to the spirit of persecution arising out of written creeds, and authorizing ambition to make religion its stalking horse, and to say to every man within or without the pale of the declaration of faith, "*so far shalt thou go, and no farther.*"

I am said to make war upon the clergy, and to hold them up to the hatred and derision of the people: it is not so. I have denounced the system, not the men. I have de-



nounced the system which splits this nation into parties, which encourages and authorizes individuals, under the plea of serving God and teaching faith, to injure what I believe the interests of man, and darken what every mind blessed with intelligence *knows* to be the light of truth. I have not denounced the clergy as men. I have denounced them as an organized body. As a body, set apart from the people, with other interests, other duties, other feelings. I have not denounced them as men—so help me that spirit of charity which I trust by my lip or my pen hath never been profaned! but I *have* denounced, and (so help me the spirit of truth which arms me to fight this battle in its cause!) so *will* I denounce them, as the organs and ostensible representatives of a pernicious system, which is driving the moral character, and shaking the political frame of this nation, to its dissolution.

But I will say more. So far from essaying to stigmatize the mass of any clergy, I have held in private esteem and respect individuals among all. The catholic, the episcopal, the baptist, the methodist, the unitarian, the universalist, the most rigid as the most benign expounders of the christian law, may doubtless show among them men who wear their religion less on the lip than in the heart, and who, more citizen than sectarian, present to their fellows a creed made up of gentleness and love. But such as these could echo if I mistake not the denunciations I pronounce. Yea! such as these, if I mistake not, writhe under the fanaticism they are constrained to tolerate in their brethren, and both lament the error of the system with which they are associated, and blush for the arrogance of those martinets in orthodoxy, whose noise drowns all gentler voices, and whose assumption of authority, awes the timid and the ignorant into submission.

Say I too much of the spirit that is abroad? Denounce I

too warmly a system, which in a land professing liberty, is the more dangerous because the less suspected? There is other persecution than that by fire and faggot; other weapons than the bayonet and the sword; other restraints than those of law and arrest; other ways to coerce contributions than by tithes and taxation: yea! and those other, and those worse, because less alarming while equally effectual and vexatious—those other, and those worse, are here. In this land, cunning does the work of violence. Persecution wears her shafts close hid: they are not winged in the broad sun-shine for every eye to see and every spirit to resent: silently, and from the covert, are they sped; unseen the aim, and unheeded the mischief. There is a secret influence at work, which all feel and none distinguish. It infects all society, taints every institution in the land, poisoning alike human instruction, human laws, and human recreation. In your schools—it diseases the infant mind with superstitious terrors, and with reason-confounding, heart-distorting creeds. In your colleges—it stifles the breath of your teachers of science, and constrains the entanglement of their simple facts with the dreams of theology. In your books and periodicals—but it matters not to speak of the press. In your courts of law—it tempts to perjury, sitting in judgment on the religious creed of witnesses, and reflecting even on that of the prisoner. In your legislatures—it dictates unconstitutional ordinances, and unconstitutional disposals of money and of lands. Nay! at this moment, it is outraging the ear of your national congress, with presbyterian Sabbath law petitions.\* In your amusements—alas! there its influence

\* This discourse was first delivered in the Second Universalist Church, New-York, (by request of its pastor and the majority of the trustees,) during the season of the presentation of those petitions at Washington, which produced the celebrated report of the committee of the senate, already familiar to every American citizen.



hath been mortal! Your amusements, which under wise direction and judicious encouragement, should elevate the mind and humanize the heart—your amusements, I say, it has degraded, it has perverted, and so led the mind astray from pleasure to vice, from healthy recreation to mind-debasing, life destroying licentiousness.

Have I charged orthodoxy with too much? Look to your stage! see what it is; then look back to ancient Greece, and judge what it might be. Listen on every hand to the denunciations of fanaticism against pleasures the most innocent, recreations the most necessary to bodily health, and conducive to social fellowship and mental improvement. See it make of the people's day of leisure, a day of penance! Thus, in the absence of innocent diversion, or improving study, driving men to intoxication, women to scandal, or to silly, sentimental, reason-confounding novels, half filled with romance and half with superstition, and by dint of fatiguing the mind with irrational doctrines, and tedious exhortations, disgusting youth with all instruction, and turning it loose upon a corrupt world with no light for its reason, no rein for its passions, no prop for its integrity.

We hear of sabbath breakers. And who are they that break the sabbath of the mind? Even such as, it would seem, taxed with sabbath breaking the poor man's friend and rich man's reprove, Jesus; who, instead of frequenting temples made with hands, where the Scribes and Pharisees expounded their written laws, and acted the outer ceremonies of their superstition, sought the world of nature and the fields of human industry, and, as he gathered the ears of corn on the day sanctified to superstition, sentenced by practice as well as precept, those observances which, at this day, in a country styled Christian, cost to the nation twenty millions per annum. "Many



things," said the mild reformer, whose mildness saved him not from martyrdom—"many things have I to say to ye, but ye cannot bear them now." And alas, could his followers bear them yet? Are they not still led as were the Jews of old by Scribes and Pharisees, who make broad their phylacteries, devour widow's houses, and for a pretence, make long prayers? Are they not still sitting in judgment on their neighbor; questioning his faith, instead of looking to their own doings; and, content with idle observances of days and seasons, neglecting all that could improve their own hearts and add to the happiness of their fellow creatures?

What think ye my friends? If Jesus, or his likeness, should now visit the earth, what church of the many which now go by his name would he enter? Or, if tempted by curiosity, he should incline to look into all, which do you think would not shut the door in his face? "He despises the law," would sound from one; "He breaks the sabbath," would echo from another; "He makes no prayers and professes no creed," would mutter a third; "He would exalt the low, bring down the mighty, and revolutionize society," would cry a fourth; "He keeps company with publicans and sinners," from a fifth; "He is no better than an infidel," would shout the whole, since he lets pass the Sadducees without reproach who profess no knowledge out of this world and this life, and denounces the Pharisees who hold the keys of heaven and hell, and know all that is passing in both regions.

It seems to me, my friends, that as one who loved peace, taught industry, equality, union, and love, one towards another, Jesus were he alive at this day, would recommend you to come out of your churches of faith, and to gather into schools of knowledge. Methinks he would enquire into the use of all the large buildings you

are now raising, for the only purpose of collecting there once a week in groups of sectarians, and this again, for the only object of learning what we are all too much disposed to believe already—viz. : that we are each of us in the right, and that all others are in the wrong. Methinks, I say, that Jesus would recommend you to pass the first day of the week rather otherwise than you pass it now, and to seek some other mode of bettering the morals of the community than by constraining each other to look grave on a Sunday, and to consider yourselves more virtuous in proportion to the idleness in which you pass one day in seven, and to the length of the doctrinal creed you allow your spiritual instructors to sign for you.

The importance attached to opinions and formal observances of days and ceremonies by all Christian sects, is truly surprising, when we consider that Jesus, so far as tradition informs us, never wrote a line, never framed a creed, condemned all prayers in public, and taught his disciples to “love one another,” which was as much as to say—*never discuss opinions*. Now those who profess to follow him, discuss little else but opinions, and therefore do little else but quarrel. To think this way, or to think that way, constitutes the whole duty of man.

My friends, I am no Christian, in the sense usually attached to the word. I am neither Jew nor Gentile, Mahomedan nor Theist; I am but a member of the human family, and would accept of truth by whomsoever offered—that truth which we can all find, if we will but seek it—in things, not in words; in nature, not in human imagination; in our own hearts, not in temples made with hands.

Fain would I see my fellow creatures in pursuit of that truth which is around, and about, and within us. Fain would I see them burying their opinions in their own



bosoms, and uniting for the study of facts and a knowledge of themselves. Many evils are abroad on the earth, and never did supineness threaten greater dangers than at the present moment. Old superstitions are shaken to their foundation. The false restraints imagined in ages of primeval ignorance are loosened from the mind. Men have grown out of the fear of devils and eternal brimstone, and, applying their ingenuity to evade the laws of earth, laugh in secret at the hobgoblin tales of hell. What then must ensue, if, while old things are passing away, we seek not to discover new? If, while the chains of superstition are falling from the mind, we build not up therein a moral bulwark, nobly to replace the Gothic barriers that are withdrawn, nor apply ourselves to lead by persuasion and conviction that nature which may be no longer cowed by superstition, nor mastered by force? Man is no longer in leading-strings, nor submissive to the rod. He is at this hour too knowing to be driven, and too ignorant to walk alone. Let a free people look to it in time, nor waiting, until law and religion are alike under foot, they shall have to devise remedies in the midst of confusion, and to school the human mind and the human heart in the depths of their corruption. Enough hath been said—the path lies clear. Virtue and truth dwell only with knowledge, and as, when a people shall possess knowledge, they will form on all subjects just opinions, so will they also, in all the relations of life, as citizens, parents, and fellow creatures, discover and pursue a just practice.



## LECTURE VII.

### ON EXISTING EVILS, AND THEIR REMEDY.

[As delivered in Philadelphia, June 2d, 1829.]

HAVING now traced with you what knowledge is in matter and in mind; what virtue is in human conduct, where its rules are to be sought, and how they may be found; tested, by the standard thus supplied, the ruling topic of discussion and instruction throughout this country; shown that, while this topic subtracts from the wealth of the nation twenty millions per annum, and from the hearts and minds of the people social fellowship and common sense, it has in nature no real existence—is not knowledge, but only imagination—is not fact, but only theory; and, having shown, moreover, that theory can supply no subject matter of instruction; that the teaching of opinions is as erroneous in principle as it is dangerous in practice; that the duty of the instructor is simply to enrich the mind with knowledge, to awaken the eye, and the ear, and the touch, to the perception of things, the judgment to their comparison and arrangement, and to leave the free, unbiassed mind to draw its own conclusions from the evidence thus collected,—I shall now present a few observations on the necessity of commencing, and gradually perfecting, a radical reform in your existing outlays of time and money—on and in churches, theological colleges, privileged and exclusive seminaries of all descriptions, religious Sabbath schools, and all their aids and adjuncts of Bibles, tracts, missionaries, priests, and preachers,

multiplied and multiplying throughout the land, until they promise to absorb more capital than did the temple of Solomon, and to devour more of the first fruits of industry than did the tribe of Levi in the plenitude of its power ;—on the necessity, I say, of substituting for your present cumbrous, expensive, useless, or rather pernicious, system of partial, opinionative, and dogmatical instruction, one at once national, rational, and republican ; one which shall take for its study, our own world and our own nature ; for its object, the improvement of man ; and for its means, the practical development of truth, the removal of temptations to evil, and the gradual equalization of human condition, human duties, and human enjoyments, by the equal diffusion of knowledge without distinction of class or sect—both of which distinctions are inconsistent with republican institutions as they are with reason and with common sense, with virtue and with happiness.

Time is it in this land to commence this reform. Time is it to check the ambition of an organized clergy, the demoralizing effects of a false system of law ; to heal the strife fomented by sectarian religion and legal disputes ; to bring down the pride of ideal wealth, and to raise honest industry to honor. Time is it to search out the misery in the land, and to heal it at the source. Time is it to remember the poor and the afflicted, ay ! and the vicious and the depraved. Time is it to perceive that every sorrow which corrodes the human heart, every vice which diseases the body and the mind, every crime which startles the ear and sends back the blood affrighted to the heart—is the product of one evil, the foul growth from one root, the distorted progeny of one corrupt parent—IGNORANCE.

Time is it to perceive this truth ; to proclaim it on the housetop, in the market place, in city and forest, throughout the land ; to acknowledge it in the depths of our



hearts, and to apply all our energies to the adoption of those salutary measures which this salutary truth spontaneously suggests. Time is it, I say, to turn our churches into halls of science, our schools of faith into schools of knowledge, our privileged colleges into state institutions for all the youth of the land. Time is it to arrest our speculations respecting unseen worlds and inconceivable mysteries, and to address our enquiries to the improvement of our human condition, and our efforts to the practical illustration of those beautiful principles of liberty and equality enshrined in the political institutions, and, first and chief, in the national declaration of independence.

And by whom and how, are these changes to be effected? By whom! And do a free people ask the question? By themselves. By themselves—*the people*.

I am addressing the people of Philadelphia—the people of a city where Jefferson penned the glorious declaration which awoke this nation and the world—the city, where the larum so astounding to tyranny, so fraught with hope, and joy, and exulting triumph to humankind, was first sounded in the ears of Americans. I speak to the descendants of those men who heard from the steps of their old state house the principles of liberty and equality first proclaimed to man. I speak to the inhabitants of a city founded by the most peaceful, the most humane, and the most practical of all Christian sects. I speak to mechanics who are uniting for the discovery of their interests and the protection of their rights. I speak to a public whose benevolence has been long harrowed by increasing pauperism, and whose social order and social happiness are threatened by increasing vice. I speak to sectarians who are weary of sectarianism. I speak to honest men who tremble for their honesty. I speak to the *dishonest* whose integrity has fallen before the discouragements waiting upon indus-



try; and who, by slow degrees, or in moments of desperation, have forsaken honest labor, because without a reward, for fraudulent speculation, because it promised one chance of success to a thousand chances of ruin. I speak to parents anxious for their offspring—to husbands who, while shortening their existence by excess of labor, foresee, at their death, not sorrow alone, but unrequited industry and hopeless penury, involving shame, and perhaps infamy, for their oppressed widows and unprotected children. I speak to human beings surrounded by human suffering—to fellow citizens pledged to fellow feeling—to republicans pledged to equal rights and, as a consequent, to equal condition and equal enjoyments; and I call them—oh, would that my voice were loud to reach every ear, and persuasive to reach every heart!—I call them to UNITE; and to unite for the consideration of the evils around us—for the discovery and application of their remedy.

Dreadful has been the distress exhibited during the past year, not in this city only, but in every city throughout the whole extent of this vast republic. Long had the mass of evil been accumulated ere it attracted attention; and, would we understand how far the plague spot is to spread, or what is to be its termination, we must look to Europe.

We are fast travelling in the footsteps of Europe, my friends; for her principles of action are ours. We have in all our habits and usages the same vices, and, with these same vices, we must have, as we see we have, the same evils.

The great principles stamped in America's declaration of independence are true, are great, are sublime, and are *all her own*. But her usages, her law, her religion, her education, are false, narrow, prejudiced, ignorant, and are the relic of dark ages—the gift and bequeathment of king-governed, priest-ridden nations, whose supremacy, indeed,

the people of America have challenged and overthrown, but whose example they are still following.

A foreigner, I have looked round on this land unblinded by local prejudices or national predilections; a friend to humankind, zealous for human improvement, enamored to enthusiasm, if you will, of human liberty, I first sought this country to see in operation those principles consecrated in her national institutions, and whose simple grandeur had fired the enthusiasm and cheered the heart of my childhood, disgusted as it was with the idle parade and pride of unjust power inherent in European aristocracy. Delighted with the sound of political liberty, the absence of bayonets and constrained taxation, I spake and published, as I felt, in praise of American institutions; and called, and, I believe, first generally awakened, the attention of the European public to their study and appreciation.

Disappointed, in common with all the friends of liberty in Europe, by the issue of the well imagined, but ill sustained, revolutions of the old continent, which closed, as you will remember, by the triumph of France and the holy alliance over the bands of Riego and Mina in Spain, I returned to this republic as to the last hope of the human family, anxious to inspect it through its wide extent, and to study it in all its details.

The result of my observation has been the conviction, that the reform commenced at the revolution of '76 has been but little improved through the term of years which have succeeded; that the national policy of the country was then indeed changed, but that its social economy has remained such as it was in the days of its European vassalage.

In confirmation of this, I will request you to observe, that your religion is the same as that of monarchical



England—taught from the same books, and promulgated and sustained by similar means, viz. a salaried priesthood, set apart from the people; sectarian churches, in whose property the people have no share, and over whose use and occupancy the people have no control; expensive missions, treasury funds, associations, and, above all, a compulsory power, compounded at once of accumulated wealth, established custom, extensive correspondence, and a system of education imbued with its spirit and all pervaded by its influence.

Again—in proof of the similarity between your internal policy and that of monarchical England, I will request you to observe that *her law is your law*. Every part and parcel of that absurd, cruel, ignorant, inconsistent, incomprehensible jumble, styled the common law of England—every part and parcel of it, I say, not abrogated or altered expressly by legislative statutes, which has been very rarely done, is at this hour the law of revolutionized America.

Farther—in proof of the identity of your fabric of civil polity with that of aristocratical England, I will request you to observe that the system of education pursued in both countries is, with little variations, one and the same. There, you have endowed universities, privileged by custom, enriched by ancient royal favor, protected by parliamentary statutes, and devoted to the upholding, perpetuating, and strengthening the power and privilege to which they owe their origin. There, too, you have parish schools under the control of the parish priest, and a press every where coerced by law, swayed, bribed, or silenced by ascendant parties or tyrannous authority. And *here* have we not colleges with endowments still held by the royal charters which first bestowed them, and colleges with lands and money granted by American legislatures—not for the ad-



vantage of the American people, but for that of their rulers; for the children of privileged professions upon whom is thus entailed the privilege of their fathers, and that as certainly as the son of a duke is born to a dukedom in England. *Here* have we not also schools controlled by the clergy; nay, have we not all our public institutions, scientific, literary, judicial, or humane, ridden by the spirit of orthodoxy; and invaded, perverted, vitiated, and tormented by opinionative distinctions? And *here* have we not a press paralyzed by fear, disgraced by party, and ruled by loud tongued fanaticism, or aspiring and threatening sectarian ambition. And more, my friends, see we not, in this nation of confederated freemen, as many distinctions of class as afflict the aristocracies of Britain, or the despotism of the Russias; and more distinctions of sect than ever cursed all the nations of Europe together, from the preaching of Peter the hermit, to the trances of Madame Krudner, or the miracles of Prince Hohenlohe?

Surely all these are singular anomalies in a republic. Sparta, when she conceived her democracy, commenced with educational equality; when she aimed at national union, she cemented that union in childhood—at the public board, in the gymnasium, in the temple, in the common habits, common feelings, common duties, and common condition. And so, notwithstanding all the errors with which her institutions were fraught, and all the vices which arose out of those errors, did she present for ages, a wondrous sample of democratic union, and consequently of national prosperity?

What, then, is wanted here? What Sparta had—a *national education*. And what Sparta, in many respects, had not—a *rational education*.

Hitherto, my friends, in government as in every branch of morals, we have but too much mistaken words for truths,

and forms for principles. To render men free, it sufficeth not to proclaim their liberty; to make them equal, it sufficeth not to call them so. True, the 4th of July, '76, commenced a new era for our race. True, the sun of promise then rose upon the world. But let us not mistake for the fulness of light what was but its harbinger. Let us not conceive that man in signing the declaration of his rights secured their possession; that having framed the theory, he had not, and hath not still, the practice to seek.

Your fathers, indeed, on the day from which dates your existence as a nation, opened the gates of the temple of human liberty. But think not they entered, nor that you have entered the sanctuary. They passed not, nor have you passed, even the threshold.

Who speaks of liberty while the human mind is in chains? Who of equality while the thousands are in squalid wretchedness, the millions harrassed with health-destroying labor, the few afflicted with health-destroying idleness, and all tormented by health-destroying solicitude? Look abroad on the misery which is gaining on the land! Mark the strife, and the discord, and the jealousies, the shock of interests and opinions, the hatreds of sect, the estrangements of class, the pride of wealth, the debasement of poverty, the helplessness of youth unprotected, of age uncomforted, of industry unrewarded, of ignorance unenlightened, of vice unreclaimed, of misery unpitied, of sickness, hunger, and nakedness unsatisfied, unalleviated, and unheeded. Go! mark all the wrongs and the wretchedness with which the eye and the ear and the heart are familiar, and then echo in triumph and celebrate in jubilee the insulting declaration—*all men are free and equal!*

That evils exist, none that have eyes, ears, and hearts, can dispute. That these evils are on the increase, none who have watched the fluctuations of trade, the sinking



price of labor, the growth of pauperism, and the increase of crime, will dispute. Little need be said here to the people of Philadelphia. The researches made by the public spirited among their own citizens, have but too well substantiated the suffering condition of a large mass of their population: In Boston, in New-York, in Baltimore, the voice of distress hath, in like manner, burst the barriers raised, and so long sustained, by the pride of honest industry, unused to ask from charity what it hath been wont to earn by the sweat of the brow. In each and every city necessity has constrained enquiry; and in each and every city enquiry has elicited the same appalling facts: that the hardest labor is often without a reward adequate to the sustenance of the laborer; that when, by over exertion and all the diseases, and often vices, which excess of exertion induces, the laborer, whose patient, sedulous industry supplies the community with all its comforts, and the rich with all their luxuries—when he, I say, is brought to an untimely grave by those exertions which, while sustaining the life of others, cut short his own—when he is mowed down by that labor whose products form the boasted wealth of the state, he leaves a family, to whom the strength of his manhood had barely furnished bread, to lean upon the weakness of a soul-stricken mother, and hurry her to the grave of her father.

Such is the information gleaned from the report of the committee lately appointed by the town meeting of the city and county of Philadelphia, and as verbatim reiterated in every populous city throughout the land. And what are the remedies suggested by our corporation, our newspaper editors, our religious societies, our tracts, and our sermons? Some have ordained fasts, multiplied prayers, and recommended pious submission to a Providence who should have instituted all this calamity for the purpose of



fulfilling the words of a Jewish prophet, "the poor shall never cease from the land." Some, less spiritual-minded, have called for larger jails and more poor houses; some, for increased poor rates and additional benevolent societies; others, for compulsory laws protective of labor, and fixing a *minimum*, below which it shall be penal to reduce it; while others, and those not the least able to appreciate all the difficulties of the question, have sought the last resource of suffering poverty and oppressed industry in the humanity and sense of justice of the wealthier classes of society.

This last is the forlorn hope presented in the touching document signed by Matthew Carey and his fellow laborers.

It were easy to observe, in reply to each and all of the palliatives variously suggested for evils, which none profess to remedy, that to punish crime when committed is not to prevent its commission; to force the work of the poor in poor houses is only farther to glut an already unproductive market; to multiply charities is only to increase pauperism; that to fix by statute the monied price of labor would be impossible in itself, and, if possible, mischievous no less to the laborer than to the employer; and that, under the existing state of things, for human beings to lean upon the compassion and justice of their fellow creatures, is to lean upon a rotten reed.

I believe no individual, possessed of common sense and common feeling, can have studied the report of the committee to which I have referred, or the multitude of similar documents furnished elsewhere, without acknowledging that reform, and that not slight nor partial, but radical and universal, is called for. All must admit that no such reform—that is, that no remedy commensurate with the evil, has been suggested, and would we but reflect, we

— should perceive that no efficient remedy *can* be suggested, or if suggested, applied, until the people are generally engaged in its discovery and its application for themselves.

In this nation, any more than in any other nation, the mass has never reflected for the mass; the people, as a body, have never addressed themselves to the study of their own condition, and to the just and fair interpretation of their common interests. And, as it was with their national independence, so shall it be with their national happiness—it shall be found only when the mass shall seek it. No people have ever received liberty *in gift*. Given, it were not appreciated; it were not understood. Won without exertion, it were lost as readily. Let the people of America recal the ten years of war and tribulation by which they purchased their national independence. Let efforts as strenuous be now made, not with the sword of steel, indeed, but with the sword of the spirit, and their farther enfranchisement from poverty, starvation, and dependence, must be equally successful.

Great reforms are not wrought in a day. Evils which are the accumulated results of accumulated errors, are not to be struck down at a blow by the rod of a magician. A free people may boast that all power is in their hands; but no effectual power can be in their hands until knowledge be in their minds.

— But how may knowledge be imparted to their minds? Such effective knowledge as shall render apparent to all the interests of all, and demonstrate the simple truths—that a nation to be strong, must be united; to be united, must be equal in condition; to be equal in condition, must be similar in habits and in feeling; to be similar in habits and in feeling, *must be raised in national institutions, as the children of a common family, and citizens of a common country.*



Before entering on the developement of the means I have here suggested for paving our way to the reform of those evils which now press upon humanity, and which, carried, perhaps, to their acme in some of the nations of Europe, are gaining ground in these United States with a rapidity alarming to all who know how to read the present, or to calculate the future—I must observe, that I am fully aware of the difficulty of convincing all minds of the urgency of these evils, and of the impossibility of engaging all classes in the application of their remedy.

In the first place, the popular suffering, great as it is, weighs not with a sufficiently equal pressure on all parts of the country; and, in the second, affects not equally all classes of the population, so as to excite to that union of exertion, which once made, the reform is effected and the nation redeemed.

While the evil day is only in prospect, or while it visits our neighbor but spares ourselves, such is the selfishness generated by existing habits, and such the supineness generated by that selfishness, that we are but too prone to shrink from every effort not absolutely and immediately necessary for the supply of our own wants or the increase of our own luxuries. Yet, would the most spoiled child of worldly fortune but look around him on the changes and chances which oftentimes sweep away the best secured treasures, and bring in a moment the capitalist to bankruptcy, and his family to want, he could not feel himself entirely removed in sympathy from the suffering portion of his fellow creatures. But let us take the case of the thriving artizan, or successful merchant—on what security does he hold that pecuniary independence which puts the bread into the mouths of his children, and protects from destitution the companion of his bosom? On sustained industry and unremitting exertions, which sickness may interrupt,



a fall in the market reduce to half its value, or a few casualties or one miscalculation in a moment annihilate. Or what if death finally interrupt the father's care or the husband's tenderness—where is the stay for his orphan children? where succor for their widowed mother, now charged alone with all the weight of their provision? I have taken no extreme cases; I have taken such as may, in the course of events, be the case of every man who hears me.

Were it my disposition, which, I think, it is not, to exaggerate evils, or were I even disposed to give a fair picture of those really existing among a large mass of the American population, more especially as crowded into the cities and manufacturing districts, easy it were to harrow the feelings of the least sensitive, and, in the relation, to harrow my own.

But as the measure it is my object this evening to suggest to the people of Philadelphia, and my intention hereafter to submit to the whole American nation, must, at the first sight, win to its support the more oppressed and afflicted, I am rather desirous of addressing my prefatory arguments to that class from whence opposition is most to be apprehended.

I know how difficult it is—reared as we all are in the distinctions of class, to say nothing of sect, to conceive of our interests as associated with those of the whole community. The man possessed of a dollar, feels himself to be, not merely one hundred cents richer, but also one hundred cents *better*, than the man who is pennyless; so on through all the gradations of earthly possessions—the estimate of our own moral and political importance swelling always in a ratio exactly proportionate to the growth of our purse. The rich man who can leave a clear independence to his children, is given to estimate them as he estimates him-

self, and to imagine something in their nature distinct from that of the less privileged heirs of hard labor and harder fare.

This might indeed appear too gross for any of us to advance in theory, but in feeling how many must plead guilty to the prejudice! Yet is there a moment when, were their thoughts known to each other, all men must feel themselves on a level. It is when as fathers they look on their children, and picture the possibility which may render them orphans, and then calculate all the casualties which may deprive them, if rich, of their inheritance, or, if poor, grind them down to deeper poverty.

But it is first to the rich, I would speak. Can the man of opulence feel tranquil under the prospect of leaving to such guardianship as existing law or individual integrity may supply, the minds, bodies, morals, or even the fortune of their children? I myself was an orphan; and I know that the very law which was my protector, sucked away a portion of my little inheritance, while that law, insufficient and avaricious as it was, alone shielded me from spoliation by my guardian. I know, too, that my youth was one of tribulation, albeit passed in the envied luxuries of aristocracy. I know that the orphan's bread may be watered with tears, even when the worst evil be not there—*dependence*.

Can, then, the rich be without solicitude, when they leave to the mercy of a heartless world the beings of their creation? Who shall cherish their young sensibilities? Who shall stand between them and oppression? Who shall whisper peace in the hour of affliction? Who shall supply principle in the hour of temptation? Who shall lead the tender mind to distinguish between the good and the evil? Who shall fortify it against the corruptions of wealth, or prepare it for the day of adversity? Such, look-



ing upon life as it is, must be the anxious thoughts even of the wealthy. What must be the thoughts of the poor man, it needs not that we should picture.

But, my friends, however differing in degree may be the anxiety of the rich and the poor, still, in its nature, is it the same. Doubt, uncertainty, apprehension, are before all. We hear of deathbed affliction. My friends, I have been often and long on the bed of mortal sickness: no fear had the threatened last sleep for me, for *I was not a parent*.

We have here, then, found an evil common to all classes, and one that is entailed from generation to generation. The measure I am about to suggest, whenever adopted, will blot this now universal affliction from existence; it will also, in the outset, alleviate those popular distresses whose poignancy and rapid increase weigh on the heart of philanthropy, and crush the best hopes of enlightened patriotism. It must further, when carried into full effect, work the radical cure of every disease which now afflicts the body politic, and build up for this nation a sound constitution, embracing at once, public prosperity, individual integrity, and universal happiness.

This measure, my friends, has been long present to my mind, as befitting the adoption of the American people; as alone calculated to form an enlightened, a virtuous, and a happy community; as alone capable of supplying a remedy to the evils under which we groan; as alone commensurate with the interests of the human family, and consistent with the political institutions of this great confederated republic.

I had occasion formerly to observe, in allusion to the efforts already made, and yet making, in the cause of popular instruction, more or less throughout the Union, that, as yet, the true principle has not been hit, and that until it be hit, all reform must be slow and inefficient.



The noble example of New-England has been imitated by other states, until all not possessed of common schools blush for the popular remissness. But, after all, how can *common schools*, under their best form, and in fullest supply, effect even the purpose which they have in view?

The object proposed by common schools (if I rightly understand it) is to impart to the whole population those means for the acquirement of knowledge which are in common use: reading and writing. To these are added arithmetic, and occasionally, perhaps, some imperfect lessons in the simpler sciences. But I would ask, supposing these institutions should even be made to embrace all the branches of intellectual knowledge, and, thus, science offered gratis to all the children of the land, how are the children of the very class, for whom we suppose the schools instituted, to be supplied with food and raiment, or instructed in the trade necessary to their future subsistence, while they are following these studies? How are they, I ask, to be fed and clothed, when, as all facts show, the labor of the parents is often insufficient for their own sustenance, and, almost universally, inadequate to the provision of the family without the united efforts of all its members? In your manufacturing districts you have children worked for twelve hours a day; and, in the rapid and certain progress of the existing system, you will soon have them, as in England, *worked to death*, and yet unable, through the period of their miserable existence, to earn a pittance sufficient to satisfy the cravings of hunger. At this present time, what leisure or what spirit, think you, have the children of the miserable widows of Philadelphia, realizing, according to the most favorable estimate of your city and county committee, sixteen dollars per annum, for food and clothing? what leisure or what spirit may their children find for visiting a school, although the

same should be open to them from sunrise to sunset? Or what leisure have usually the children of your most thriving mechanics, after their strength is sufficiently developed to spin, sew, weave, or wield a tool? It seems to me, my friends, that to build school houses now-a-days is something like building churches. When you have them, you need some measure to ensure their being occupied.

But, as our time is short, and myself somewhat fatigued by continued exertions, I must hasten to the rapid development of the system of instruction and protection which has occurred to me as capable, and alone capable, of opening the door to universal reform.

In lieu of all common schools, high schools, colleges, seminaries, houses of refuge, or any other juvenile institution, instructional or protective, I would suggest that the state legislatures be directed (after laying off the whole in townships or hundreds) to organize, at suitable distances, and in convenient and healthy situations, establishments for the general reception of all the children resident within the said school district. These establishments to be devoted, severally, to children between a certain age. Say, the first, infants between two and four, or two and six, according to the density of the population, and such other local circumstances as might render a greater or less number of establishments necessary or practicable. The next to receive children from four to eight, or six to twelve years. The next from twelve to sixteen, or to an older age if found desirable. Each establishment to be furnished with instructors in every branch of knowledge, intellectual and operative, with all the apparatus, land, and conveniences necessary for the best development of all knowledge; the same, whether operative or intellectual, being always calculated to the age and strength of the pupils.



To obviate, in the commencement, every evil result possible from the first mixture of a young population, so variously raised in error or neglect, a due separation should be made in each establishment; by which means those entering with bad habits would be kept apart from the others until corrected. How rapidly reform may be effected on the plastic disposition of childhood, has been sufficiently proved in your houses of refuge, more especially when such establishments have been under *liberal* superintendance, as was formerly the case in New-York. Under their orthodox directors, those asylums of youth have been converted into jails.

It will be understood that, in the proposed establishments, the children would pass from one to the other in regular succession, and that the parents, who would necessarily be resident in their close neighborhood, could visit the children at suitable hours, but, in no case, interfere with or interrupt the rules of the institution.

In the older establishments, the well directed and well protected labor of the pupil would, in time, suffice for, and, then, exceed their own support; when the surplus might be devoted to the maintenance of the infant establishments.

In the beginning, and until all debt was cleared off, and so long as the same should be found favorable to the promotion of these best palladiums of a nation's happiness, a double tax might be at once expedient and politic.

First, a moderate tax per head for every child, to be laid upon its parents conjointly, or divided between them, due attention being always paid to the varying strength of the two sexes, and to the undue depreciation which now rests on female labor. The more effectually to correct the latter injustice, as well as to consult the convenience of the industrious classes generally, this parental tax might be



rendered payable either in money, or in labor, produce, or domestic manufactures, and should be continued for each child until the age when juvenile labor should be found, on the average, equivalent to the educational expenses, which, I have reason to believe, would be at twelve years.

This first tax on parents to embrace equally the whole population; as, however moderate, it would inculcate a certain forethought in all the human family; more especially where it is most wanted—in young persons, who, before they assumed the responsibility of parents, would estimate their fitness to meet it.

The second tax to be on property, increasing in percentage with the wealth of the individual. In this manner I conceive the rich would contribute, according to their riches, to the relief of the poor, and to the support of the state, by raising up its best bulwark—an enlightened and united generation.

Preparatory to, or connected with, such measures, a registry should be opened by the state, with offices through all the townships, where on the birth of every child, or within a certain time appointed, the same should be entered, together with the names of its parents. When two years old, the parental tax should be payable, and the juvenile institution open for the child's reception; from which time forward it would be under the protective care and guardianship of the state, while it need never be removed from the daily, weekly, or frequent inspection of the parents.

Orphans, of course, would find here an open asylum. If possessed of property, a contribution would be paid from its revenue to the common educational fund; if unprovided, they would be sustained out of the same.

In these nurseries of a free nation, no inequality must be allowed to enter. Fed at a common board; clothed in

a common garb, uniting neatness with simplicity and convenience; raised in the exercise of common duties, in the acquirement of the same knowledge and practice of the same industry, varied only according to individual taste and capabilities; in the exercise of the same virtues, in the enjoyment of the same pleasures; in the study of the same nature; in pursuit of the same object—their own and each other's happiness—say! would not such a race, when arrived at manhood and womanhood, work out the reform of society—perfect the free institutions of America?

I have drawn but a sketch, nor could I presume to draw the picture of that which the mind's eye hath seen alone, and which it is for the people of this land to realize.

In this sketch, my friends, there is nothing but what is practical and practicable; nothing but what you yourselves may contribute to effect. Let the popular suffrage be exercised with a view to the popular good. Let the industrious classes, and all honest men of all classes, unite for the sending to the legislatures those who will represent the real interests of the many, not the imagined interests of the few—of the people at large, not of any profession or class.

To develop farther my views on this all important subject at the present time, would be to fatigue your attention, and exhaust my own strength. I shall prosecute this subject in the periodical of which I am editor,\* which, in common with my public discourses, have been, and will ever be, devoted to the common cause of human improvement, and addressed to humankind without distinction of nation, class, or sect. May you, my fellow beings, unite in the same cause, in the same spirit! May you learn to seek truth without fear! May you farther learn to advocate truth as you distinguish it; to be valiant in its

\* The Free Enquirer, published in New-York.

defence, and peaceful while valiant; to meet all things, and bear all things, and dare all things for the correction of abuses, and the effecting, in private and in public, in your own minds, through the minds of your children, friends, and companions, and, above all, *through your legislatures*, a radical reform in all your measures, whether as citizens, or as men!

*[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible due to fading and bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. It appears to be a continuation of the lecture's content.]*



## ADDRESS I.

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[Delivered in the New Harmony Hall, on the Fourth of July, 1828.]

THE custom which commemorates in rejoicing the anniversary of the national independence of these states, has its origin in a human feeling, amiable in its nature, and beneficial, under proper direction, in its indulgence.

From the era which dates the national existence of the American people, dates also a mighty step in the march of human knowledge. And it is consistent with that principle in our conformation which leads us to rejoice in the good which befalls our species, and to sorrow for the evil, that our hearts should expand on this day;—on this day, which calls to memory the conquest achieved by knowledge over ignorance, willing co-operation over blind obedience, opinion over prejudice, new ways over old ways, when, fifty-two years ago, America declared her national independence, and associated it with her republican federation. Reasonable is it to rejoice on this day, and useful to reflect thereon; so that we rejoice for the real, and not any imaginary good, and reflect on the positive advantages obtained, and on those which it is ours farther to acquire.

Dating, as we justly may, a new era in the history of man from the Fourth of July, 1776, it would be well, that is, it would be useful, if on each anniversary we examined the progress made by our species in just knowledge and just practice. Each Fourth of July would then stand as a tide mark in the flood of time, by which to as-

certain the advance of the human intellect, by which to note the rise and fall of each successive error, the discovery of each important truth, the gradual melioration in our public institutions, social arrangements, and, above all, in our moral feelings and mental views. Let such a review as this engage annually our attention, and sacred, doubly sacred, shall be this day; and that not to one nation only, but to all nations capable of reflection!

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The political dismemberment of these once British colonies from the parent island, though involving a valuable principle, and many possible results, would scarcely merit a yearly commemoration, even in this country, had it not been accompanied by other occurrences more novel, and far more important. I allude to the seal then set to the system of representative government, till then imperfectly known in Europe, and insecurely practised in America, and to the crown then placed on this system by the novel experiment of political federation. The frame of federative government that sprung out of the articles signed in '76, is one of the most beautiful inventions of the human intellect. It has been in government what the steam engine has been in mechanics, and the printing press in the dissemination of knowledge.

But it needs not that we should now pause to analyse what all must have considered. It is to one particular feature in our political institutions that I would call attention, and this, because it is at once the most deserving of notice, and the least noticed. Are our institutions better than those of other countries? Upon fair examination most men will answer *yes*. But why will they so answer? Is it because they are republican, instead of monarchical? democratic, rather than aristocratic? In so far as the republican principle shall have been proved more conducive to the general good than the monarchical, and



the democratic than the aristocratic—in so far will the reasons be good. But there is another and a better reason than these. There is, in the institutions of this country, one principle, which, had they no other excellence, would secure to them the preference over those of all other countries. I mean—and some devout patriots will start—I mean the principle of *change*.

I have used a word to which is attached an obnoxious meaning. Speak of *change*, and the world is in alarm. And yet where do we not see change? What is there in the physical world *but* change? And what would there be in the moral world *without* change? The flower blossoms, the fruit ripens, the seed is received and germinates in the earth, and we behold the tree. The aliment we eat to satisfy our hunger incorporates with our frame, and the atoms composing our existence to day, are exhaled to-morrow. In like manner our feelings and opinions are moulded by circumstance, and matured by observation and experience. All is change. Within and about us no one thing is as it was, or will be as it is. Strange, then, that we should start at a word used to signify a thing so familiar! Stranger yet that we should fail to appreciate a principle which, inherent in all matter, is no less inherent in ourselves; and which, as it has tracked our mental progress heretofore, so will it track our progress through time to come!

But will it be said *change* has a bad, as well as a good sense? It may be for the better, and it may be for the worse? In the physical world it can be neither the one nor the other. It can be simply such as it is. But in the moral world—that is, in the thoughts, and feelings, and inventions of men, change may certainly be either for the better or for the worse, or it may be for neither. Changes that are neither bad nor good can have regard



*only* to trivial matters, and can be as little worthy of observation as of censure. Changes that are from better to worse can originate only in ignorance, and are ever amended so soon as experience has substantiated their mischief. Where men then are free to consult experience they will correct their practice, and make changes for the better. It follows, therefore, that the more free men are, the more changes they will make. In the beginning, possibly, for the worse; but most certainly in time for the better; until their knowledge enlarging by observation, and their judgment strengthening by exercise, they will find themselves in the straight, broad, fair road of improvement. Out of change, therefore, springs improvement; and the people who shall have imagined a peaceable mode of changing their institutions, hold a surety for their melioration. This surety is worth all other excellencies. Better were the prospects of a people under the influence of the worst government who should hold the power of changing it, than those of a people under the best who should hold no such power. Here, then, is the great beauty of American government. The simple machinery of representation carried through all its parts, gives facility for its being moulded at will to fit with the knowledge of the age. If imperfect in any or all of its parts, it bears within it a perfect principle—the principle of improvement. And, let us observe, that this principle is all that we can ever know of perfection. Knowledge, and all the blessings which spring out of knowledge, can never be more than progressive; and whatsoever *sets open the door* does all for us—does every thing.

The clear sighted provision in the national constitution, as in the constitutions of the different states, by which the frame of government can be moulded at will by the public voice, and so made to keep pace in progress with the public

mind, is the master-stroke in constitutional law. Were our institutions far less enlightened and well digested than they are—were every other regulation erroneous, every other ordinance defective—nay, even tyrannous—this single provision would counterbalance all. Let but the door be opened, and be fixed open, for improvement to hold on her unimpeded course, and vices, however flagrant, are but the evils of an hour. Once lanch the animal man in the road of enquiry, and he *shall*—he *must*—hold a forward career. He may be sometimes checked; he may seem occasionally to retrograde; but his retreat is only that of the receding wave in the inning tide. His master movement is always in advance. By this do we distinguish man from all other existences within the range of our observation. By this does he stand pre-eminent over all known animals. By *this*—by his capability of improvement: by his tendency to improve whenever scope is allowed for the developement of his faculties. To hold him *still*, he must be chained. Snap the chain, and he springs forward.

But will it be said, that the chains which bind him are more than one? That political bonds are much, but not all; and that when broken, we may still be slaves? I know not, my friends. We tax our ingenuity to draw nice distinctions. We are told of political liberty—of religious liberty—of moral liberty. Yet, after all, is there more than one liberty; and these divisions, are they not the more and the less of the same thing? The provision we have referred to in our political institutions, as framed in accordance with the principle inherent in ourselves, insures to us all of free action that statutes *can* insure. Supposing that our laws, constitutional, civil, or penal, should in any thing cripple us at the present, the power will be with us to amend or annul them so soon (and how might it be sooner?) as our enlarged knowledge shall



enable us to see in what they err. All the liberty therefore that we yet lack will gradually spring up—*there*, where our bondage is—in our minds. To be free we have but to see our chains. Are we disappointed—are we sometimes angry, because the crowd or any part of the crowd around us bows submissively to mischievous usages or unjust laws? Let us remember, that they do so in ignorance of their mischief and injustice, and that when they see these, as in the course of man's progressive state they must see them, these and other evils will be corrected.

Inappreciable is this advantage that we hold (unfortunately) above other nations! The great national and political revolution of '76 set the seal to the liberties of North America. And but for one evil, and that of immense magnitude, which the constitutional provision we have been considering does not fairly reach—I allude to negro slavery and the degradation of our colored citizens—we could foresee for the whole of this magnificent country a certain future of uniform and peaceful improvement. While other nations have still to win reform at the sword's point, we have only to will it. While in Europe men have still to fight, we have only to learn. While there they have to cope with ignorance armed cap-a-pee, encircled with armies and powerful with gold, we have only peacefully to collect knowledge, and to frame our institutions and actions in accordance with it.

It is true, that we have much knowledge to collect, and consequently much to amend in our opinions and our practice. It is also true that we are often ignorant of what has been done, and quite unaware that there is yet any thing to do. The very nature of the national institutions is frequently mistaken, and the devotion exhibited for them as frequently based on a wrong principle. Here, as in other countries, we hear of *patriotism*; that is, of love



of country in an exclusive sense ; of love of our countrymen in contradistinction to the love of our fellow-creatures ; of love of the constitution, instead of love or appreciation of those principles upon which the constitution is, or ought to be, based, and upon which, if it should be found not to be based, it would merit no attachment at all.

The sentiment here adverted to involves much of importance to us in our double character of human beings and citizens. That double character it will be also useful that we examine, as much confusion prevails in the vulgar ideas on the subject.

It will be conceded, that we do not cease to be human beings when we become citizens ; and farther, that our happy existence as human beings is of more importance to us than our artificial existence as members of a nation or subjects of a government. Indeed, the only rational purpose for which we can suppose men congregated into what are called nations, is the increase of happiness—the insuring of some advantage, real or imagined. The only rational purpose for which we can suppose governments organized, the same. If, upon examination, we should find the object not gained, the experiment, so far as it went, would have failed, and we should then act rationally to break up such national congregations, and to change or annul such governments. Our character as citizens, therefore, must ever depend upon our finding it for our interest as human beings to stand in that relation. What then is patriotism, or the fulfilment of our duties as citizens, but the acting consistently in that way which we conceive it for our interest that we should act ? Or what reason might be offered for our consulting the interests of a government, unless its interests are in unison with our own ?

The great error of the wisest known nations of antiquity, the Greeks and Romans, was the preference

invariably given to the imagined interests of an imaginary existence called *the state* or *country*, and the real interests of the real existences, or human beings, upon whom, individually and collectively, their laws could alone operate. Another error was the opposition in which they invariably placed the interests of their own nation to the interests of all other nations; and a third and greater error, was the elevating into a virtue this selfish preference of their own national interests, under the name of patriotism. The moderns are growing a little wiser on these matters, but they are still very ignorant. The least ignorant are the people of this country; but they have much to learn. Americans no longer argue on the propriety of making all men soldiers, in order that their nation may be an object of terror to the rest of the world. They understand that the happiness of a people is the only rational object of a government, and the only object for which a people, free to choose, can have a government at all. They have, farther, almost excluded war as a profession, and reduced it from a system of robbery to one of simple defence. In so doing, they ought also to have laid aside all show of military parade, and all ideas of military glory. If they have not done so, it is that their reform in this matter is yet imperfect, and their ideas respecting it are confused.

Who among us but has heard, and, perhaps, echoed eulogiums on the patriotism of statesmen and soldiers—not because they have upheld some strict principle of justice, which should rather merit the name of virtue, but because they have flattered the vanity of their countrymen in a public speech, defended their own interests, and the national interests, in some foreign treaty, or their own possessions, and the national possessions, in a siege or a pitched battle? It is not that some of these actions may not be just and proper; but are they justly and properly esti-



mated? Is it *virtuous* in a man if a pistol be presented to his breast, to knock down the assailant? The action is perfectly warrantable; but does it call forth admiration? Should the attack be made on another, and should he defend the life of that other at the risk of his own; the action, though not exceedingly meritorious, might excite a moderate admiration, as involving a forgetfulness of self in the service rendered.

Does not the defence of country afford a parallel case to the first supposition? Insomuch as it be ours, we defend our own. We do what it is fair and proper that we should do, but we do nothing more. What, then, is patriotism, of which we hear so much, and understand so little? If it mean only a proper attention to our own interests, and the interests of the people with whom we stand connected, and of the government instituted for our protection, it is a rational sentiment, and one appertaining to our organization. It is one, in short, with the love of self, and the principle of self-defence and self-preservation. Again; are we to understand by it an attachment to the soil we tread, because we tread it; the language we speak, because we speak it; the government that rules us, merely because it rules us? It means nothing, or it means nonsense. Again; are we to understand by patriotism a preference for the interests of our own nation under all circumstances, even to the sacrifice of those of other nations—it is a vice.

In continental Europe, of late years, the words patriotism and patriot have been used in a more enlarged sense than it is usual here to attribute to them, or than is attached to them in Great Britain. Since the political struggles of France, Italy, Spain, and Greece, the word patriotism has been employed, throughout continental Europe, to express a love of the public good; a preference for the interests of the many to those of the few; a desire for the



emancipation of the human race from the thrall of despotism, religious and civil; in short, patriotism there is used rather to express the interest felt in the human race in general, than that felt for any country, or inhabitants of a country, in particular. And patriot, in like manner, is employed to signify a lover of human liberty and human improvement, rather than a mere lover of the country in which he lives, or the tribe to which he belongs. Used in this sense, patriotism is a virtue, and a patriot a virtuous man. With such an interpretation, a patriot is a useful member of society, capable of enlarging all minds, and bettering all hearts with which he comes in contact; a useful member of the human family, capable of establishing fundamental principles, and of merging his own interests, those of his associates, and those of his nation, in the interests of the human race. Laurels and statues are vain things, and mischievous as they are childish; but, could we imagine them of use, on *such* a patriot alone could they be with any reason bestowed.

Is there a thought can fill the human mind  
 More pure, more vast, more generous, more refin'd  
 Than that which guides the enlightened patriot's toil:  
 Not he, whose view is bounded by his soil:  
 Not he, whose narrow heart can only shrine  
 The land—the people that he calleth *mine*;  
 Not he, who to set up that land on high,  
 Will make whole nations bleed, whole nations die;  
 Not he, who, calling that land's rights his pride,  
 Trampleth the rights of all the earth beside;  
 No!—He it is, the just, the generous soul!  
 Who owneth brotherhood with either pole,  
 Stretches from realm to realm his spacious mind,  
 And guards the weal of all the human kind,  
 Holds Freedom's banner o'er the earth unfurl'd,  
 And stands the guardian patriot of a world!

If such a patriotism as we have last considered should

seem likely to obtain in any country, it should be certainly in this. In this, which is truly the home of all nations, and in the veins of whose citizens flows the blood of every people on the globe. Patriotism, in the exclusive meaning, is surely not made for America. Mischievous every where, it were here both mischievous and absurd. The very origin of the people is opposed to it. The institutions, in their principle, militate against it. The day we are celebrating protests against it. It is for Americans, more especially, to nourish a nobler sentiment; one more consistent with their origin, and more conducive to their future improvement. It is for them more especially to know why they love their country, and to *feel* that they love it, not because it *is* their country, but because it is the palladium of human liberty—the favoured scene of human improvement. It is for them, more especially, to know why they honor their institutions, and to *feel* that they honor them because they are based on just principles. It is for them, more especially, to examine their institutions, because they have the means of improving them; to examine their laws, because at will they can alter them. It is for them to lay aside luxury, whose wealth is in industry; idle parade, whose strength is in knowledge; ambitious distinctions, whose principle is equality. It is for them not to rest satisfied with words, who can seize upon things; and to remember, that equality means, not the mere equality of political rights, however valuable, but equality of instruction, and equality in virtue; and that liberty means, not the mere voting at elections, but the free and fearless exercise of the mental faculties, and that self-possession which springs out of well-reasoned opinions and consistent practice. It is for them to honor principles rather than men—to commemorate events rather than days: when they rejoice, to know

for what they rejoice, and to rejoice only for what has brought, and what brings, peace and happiness to men. The event we commemorate this day has procured much of both, and shall procure, in the onward course of human improvement, more than we can now conceive of. For this—for the good obtained, and yet in store for our race—let us rejoice ! But let us rejoice as men, not as children—as human beings, rather than as Americans—as reasoning beings, not as ignorants. So shall we rejoice to good purpose, and in good feeling ; so shall we improve the victory once on this day achieved, until all mankind hold with us the jubilee of independence.



## ADDRESS II.

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[Delivered in the Philadelphia Theatre, on the Fourth of July, 1829.]

[The Declaration of Independence was read, and laid, unrolled, on the table by the speaker, who during the following Address, will be conceived as frequently appealing to the same.]

### FELLOW CITIZENS AND FELLOW BEINGS—

The day we are assembled to commemorate, hath been ushered in by the roar of cannon, and the roll of musketry. Such, in very deed, was the note of war and dreadful preparation it awoke for your fathers. Such, in very deed, had they to hear and to answer, as they might and as they could, when, weak in numbers, unskilled in the art of human butchery, but strong in the courage of a righteous cause, they gave the challenge to tyranny in the name of humankind; and staked life, fortune, and honor on the throw. Yea! on that morn, big with the destinies of humankind, prophetic of reforms then even unimagined, of knowledge, and liberty, and virtue then even unhopd for and unconceived—yea! on that morn, when freedom's first larum was rung to the world, and despotism's legions sprang to arms at the sound, then, indeed, might the fathers of our peaceful liberties, in proclaiming those truths in which we, now in part, and hereafter in fulness, may live, and move, and have our being as free-men—then, indeed, I say, in uttering the words of peace, might they grasp the weapons of war; and, while pronouncing the future redemption of the world from violence, injustice, and tyranny, might they array

the battle, and mount the cannon, and number the children of the land, who, in the hour of need, might prove them men of war, and forsake the plough and the pruning hook, for the musket and the spear.

But wherefore now sounds the martial reveillie and the clash of steel? Where is the foe who threatens devastation to our borders, fire to our cities, slaughter to our people? Are his fleets on the waters—his armies in the field, that we wake the day as with the thunders of battle, and profane this solemn anniversary with sights, and sounds, and pageants, and clamor befitting a sieged city; and awakening thoughts of violence and blood, unhallowed ambition, and more unhallowed murder?

Curse on the crimson'd plumes, the banners flouting,  
 The stirring clarion, the leaders shouting,  
 The fair caparisons, the war horse champing,  
 The array'd legions—pressing, rushing, tramping,  
 The blazon'd falchions, crests that toss afar,  
 The bold emprize, the spirit rousing jar,  
 The martial pæans, thundering acclaim,  
 The death of glory, and the living fame,  
 The sculptor's monument, the people's bays,  
 The historian's narrative, the poet's lays—  
 Oh—curse on all the pageant and the show,  
 That veileth o'er the fiendish hell below!

Far be such pageantry from our eyes—such sounds from our ears, on this day of hope, and in this land of peace! Let the insignia of death, and the parade of military violence, bespeak the accession of European monarchs to the lawless thrones of lawless power. Let the war note and the cannon's thunder proclaim the success of titled robbers returning from the sack of cities, and desolation of empires. Let them follow the steps, and celebrate the deeds, of insane and insatiate ambition. Let them surround the car of bloody conquest, where they

may drown the cry of the injured, and the curse of the oppressed. Let them sound in the courts of tyranny, where they may stifle the moan of the captive, and the death-sob of the patriot martyr. Let them swell over the field of carnage, where they may drown the sigh of the widow and the shriek of expiring agony. There let them sound ; for there they speak the spirit of the hour, and proclaim their own work of robbery and death !

But not the chaste ear of liberty let such sounds profane, where, as in this land, she hath broken her sword to clasp the wand of peace ; and waits only for knowledge to extend her dominion, and fix her throne in every human breast. No ! let the sound of rejoicing, in this land of promise, be heard in the glad voice of an enlightened and united people. Let it breathe from minds wise with truth, and hearts warm with benevolence. Let it rise in songs of joy from fields rich in the treasures of prosperous industry ; from dwellings blessed with social happiness ; from a land—from a world possessed, improved, enjoyed by a race awakened from ignorance, redeemed from error, reclaimed from vice, and healed from suffering. Yea ! let the sun which riseth on this blessed morn—this festival of freedom and anniversary of human independence—be hailed by sounds betokening universal peace and universal prosperity ; and welcomed by hearts proud and blessed in the accomplishment of the gloried and the glorious declaration—*all men are free and equal.*

I have said *let this so be.* Let this so be ; for this is not yet. I am not here, as the custom is, to flatter your pride, fellow citizens of a common country ! by recounting the deeds of your ancestors, and applauding you for the truths they proclaimed, and the conquests they achieved. I am not here, fellow beings of a common race ! to feed your presumption, by culling from the an-



nals of humankind the brightest records of human greatness, and teaching ye that, in wisdom, ye are wiser than the wisest, and, in virtue, more exalted than the best. Enough have ye heard of flattery—more than enough of gratulation. The more honest, the more useful, but the more ungracious and thankless task be mine to speak the words of counsel, or, if it must be, of reproof.

The first jubilee of your nation's independence has been celebrated, and ye are advancing towards the second. Fifty-three years have ye been in possession of the heritage won by your fathers; that heritage comprising national independence and political freedom—the one guaranteeing a free theatre of action at home; the other presenting security from all interference from abroad.

Previous to that memorable era which converted these then colonies into independent states, the North American continent was known to few Europeans, save the business trader, the daring adventurer, or the political martyr. They only whom gain allured, or persecution drove to the shores, seemed aware of their existence. Even their imperious rulers, while taxing the population, disputing their laws and their constitutions, were ignorant of the extent and geography of the country, and, possibly, in common with even the better informed portion of the English community, imagined the color of its population to be akin to that of the Moors, and its language to be a corruption of Iroquois.

The resistance of America first fixed the eyes of the world upon her. It was at first the gaze of astonishment and curiosity. But, when the battle was fought, and that having sealed her independence with her blood, she sat down to entrench her liberty within the novel bulwark of novel institutions; when her act of national independence had been followed by a declaration of

rights, and a constitution based upon and limited by those rights; and, when a term of years had tried the strength of the daring experiment, she then became, what she still is—the hope of the nations, and the terror of their oppressors. On her, from that hour, has the eye of human patriotism been fixed. The political reformer, in lands the most benighted and enslaved, has seen in the existence of America, the promise of his own country's redemption; while, in the same, the philosopher hath found a surety for the final and universal enfranchisement of humankind.

When the European sage hath seen the old continent bowed beneath the yoke—when he hath seen its choicest sons shed their blood on the scaffold, expire in dungeons, or deplore in exile and poverty their degraded country and ruined hopes—when he hath seen the lights of knowledge quenched around him, the tide of time turned, as it were, backward in its course, and the human mind receding into the night of bygone ages—still in this wide spreading scene of desolation could his heart find comfort—still did he behold a nation, strong and established in principle, with whom was the power to roll back the clouds of ignorance, and bid the human intellect “move on!” Then, when the storm gathered darkest around him, hath he said, “Behold liberty hath followed the sun in his path, and called the new hemisphere her own! and there shall not knowledge kindle her torch, and man, by its light, explore his own world and himself, until error, crime, and wretchedness shall disappear, and truth, in its effulgence, break upon the world?”

Hath wisdom hoped thus of ye, free born citizens of independent republics! Hath such, I say, been her hope? If it have, how have ye fulfilled it?

Oh, people of America! weighty is your responsibility!



The destinies of mankind hang upon *your* breath. The fate of all the nations of the earth is entrusted to *your* keeping. On you devolves the task of vindicating our human nature from the slanders heaped on it by superstitious ignorance, and the libels imagined by designing ambition. With you rests the duty, for with you is the power, to disprove the blasphemies of temporal tyrants, and spiritual craftsmen. On you the whole family of humankind turns the eye of expectation. From the Hellespont to the icy sea—from the Don to Atlantic, suffering Europe hopes in your liberty, and waits for the influence of the virtue she dreams must be yours. On the shores of the ravaged Tagus, the ruined Tyber, the barbarous Tanais and Danube, the palace crowned Thames and luxurious Seine, where wealth displays its splendor, and poverty its wretchedness—there, in each varied realm and distant region, does the oft defeated patriot, and oft disappointed believer in the latent excellence and final enfranchisement of trampled humanity, breathe his sighs, and wing his hopes to the far off land, which, on this day, celebrates, not its own, but the world's festival; and renews, in the name of humankind, the declaration of human independence.

Say, will ye disappoint these high expectations? Will ye prove false to the cause ye have espoused? Will ye belie the pledge of your fathers and your own; and make of this day, and all that it commemorates, a by-word and a mockery among all the nations of the earth?

Let me reason with you, fellow beings! for to develope your interests, to point to your duties, to detect your negligence, or, if such there be, to challenge your transgressions, am I here.

High is the ground you have assumed, people of the United States! Pure and sublime are the principles on



which you have based your institutions. Simple and grand are those institutions themselves. And, in proportion to the greatness of these, is your responsibility.

Other nations, governed by the loose tide of circumstances, or by the whim of silly monarchs and their crafty ministers, may throw from them the folly of their national errors, or claim but little part in their wiser actions. Not so with you, people of these United States! You have willed yourselves *free* as well as independent. You are proclaimed to the world for a self governing people. You have declared liberty to be the birthright of man. You have purchased it with toil, and blood, and suffering; entrenched it within the peaceful but immutable bulwarks of representative government, and hold in your hands the power to correct its every error, and to improve its every good.

Behold, then, every institution, every law, every action, of your government emanating from yourselves! Is the spirit of the national policy enlightened—on you reflects the honor. Are the public measures wise—to you is traced the wisdom. Is aught done foolishly—the folly rests with your ignorance. Is aught neglected—with your negligence lies the omission. You may not, then, be judged in comparison with other nations. Your own mouth must supply your sentence. Even by those principles shall you be tried, which are set forth in *this declaration*; and to the support of which, you, even as your fathers before you, have pledged your lives, your fortunes, and your honor.

If, then, in your constitutional code, there shall be found one article in violation of the principles herein enshrined, then is your sacred honor impeached in the eyes of the world. If, in one act of your government, at home or abroad, you shall have violated these principles, then

is your sacred honor impeached in the eyes of the world. If you shall have harbored within your bosom, and sanctioned by your laws, one practice outraging these principles, then is your sacred honor impeached in the eyes of the world. If ye shall have omitted one measure necessary for the protection and practical illustration of these principles, then is your sacred honor impeached in the eyes of the world.

How stands, then, your account, my fellow citizens? How have ye fulfilled your promise and redeemed your pledge? Can ye, on this day, when the eyes of the world are upon ye, renew your solemn appeal to all the nations of the earth, and court their scrutiny throughout your borders? Can ye, on this day, challenge the investigation of mankind, and say—"We have improved the heritage bequeathed by our fathers. We have followed the path they traced for our footsteps. We have revealed, in our practice, the excellence of those truths whose theory they proclaimed. We have exercised those rights and powers which they purchased with their blood, and gave us, in peace to enjoy, and in wisdom to improve?"

Can ye, fellow citizens, say this? Oh—would, for the sake of humankind, that ye could answer "Yea!"

Bitter are the words of reproof; nor needs it that my voice should speak them. The cry of misery hath gone up from the land; and that cry is your condemnation.

And was it for this your fathers raised the standard of rebellion? Was it for this they braved an empire's power, and bare with ten years of war and tribulation? Was it to effect no more of good than we see around us, that they shut their unarmed ports against the navies of Britain, and set at nought the authorities of ancient days and the threats of parliaments and thrones? Was it to exchange the open tyranny of temporal kings for the



more subtle dominion of spiritual hierarchs, that the American people first pledged their honor to this sacred instrument? Was it to build up the ascendancy of priests omniscient by the grace of God, that they challenged the prerogatives of monarchs omnipotent by the same? Was it to crush down the sons and daughters of your country's industry under the accumulated and accumulating evils of neglect, poverty, vice, starvation, and disease, that your fathers bought your independence with their blood, and decreed, by this charter, your equality as citizens, and your liberty as men? Oh! were this noble instrument to work no more of practical reform than it hath wrought to this hour, wiser it were to burn it on the very spot where sages first conceived and heroes proclaimed it, than longer to mock the ears of this nation and the hopes of the world with the sound of truths, man is never to realize, of blessings he is never to enjoy! Yea! were the rights of conscience, of self government, of thought, and of action, as set forth in this declaration, able to effect no more than we behold, I would tell ye to hasten to your old state house—and there, where these bold words first startled the world, to consign them to oblivion. I would tell ye, I say, to let the same walls which echoed the first cry of "Liberty and Equality," give back, ere they totter to decay, the last hollow murmurs of a deceiving sound. I would tell ye to end in the patriot's breast the sickness of hope long delayed; to remove from the ear of reason and the eye of philanthropy sights and sounds which should then speak only of insult and mockery; and to leave the good and the wise, who now stand expecting at your hands the redemption of our race, to let go the deceiving anchor of their hope, and nerve their minds to view with fortitude, or apathy evils without re-



medy, and submit to a destiny beyond the reach of circumstance to influence, or knowledge to improve.

I pray ye to observe and well to understand that the fate of this nation involves that of the world; and that if man should here fail to improve his nature and his condition, his nature must stand demonstrated for innately depraved, his condition for irretrievably wretched. No argument is required to show that, if the human character and position are capable of improvement, it must be in the country where human exertion is free. All must perceive that if good sense and right principles of action are to take place of prejudice and corrupt principles of action, it is in the country whose government, in its forms as well as its measures, may profit by the lessons of experience and look to public opinion for its guide and its corrector.

I have already (in the address delivered on the last anniversary of this day) developed, in full, what I conceive to constitute the excellence of the national institutions, and to which it is now only necessary to make a passing allusion.

I then observed the great beauty of American government to be, *that the simple machinery of representation, carried through all its parts, gives facility for its being moulded at will to fit with the knowledge of the age; that thus, although it should be imperfect in any or all of its parts, it bears within it a perfect principle—the principle of improvement.* And that, therefore, we should distinguish the advantage we possess over other nations, to be—*not that our form of government is republican, or democratic, or federative, but that it possesses the power of silent adaptation to the altering views of the governing and governed people; that it may ever peacefully be changed with the changing*

*spirit of the age, and express the sentiments and advance the interests of each successive generation.*

This one distinguishing property of a government, purely representative in all its parts and modes, is that, in virtue of which, the era we now celebrate, and this charter of the rights of humankind, may alone be made instrumental to the happiness of our race. And so, in like manner, has it been the nonappreciation and nonperception of this one inherent excellence which has hitherto neutralized the effect of the American institutions.

This, with all other errors, may be traced to that defective instruction, which, teaching words, apart from principles as from things, makes us ever intent on the sign instead of the substance, the theory instead of the practice.

Because we find in this instrument the liberty and equality of man set forth as an abstract truth, we conceive the same to be practically secured. Because we have established in the constitutional code that each male adult, or nearly so, shall have a voice in the nomination of the public officers, we conceive ourselves to be in effect a self governing people. And yet to what, I pray ye, does the privilege of the elective franchise, as now exercised, amount? To a *choice of men*, and those men found, and necessarily found, among a class whose interests are at variance with those of the great body of the nation. And what are the results even of this right of choice, partial and ineffectual as it is? Let the history of every election declare—from that of a militia colonel to the governors of your commonwealths; from that of a member of your city council to the officers of your national senate, or even to the first magistrate of the republic! What, I ask, at this hour, are the moral results to the American people of that political right upon



which rests the whole frame of their civil liberty? What does its exercise now generate but a spirit of intrigue and ambition on the one hand—of license, violence, and corruption on the other? What have your popular elections to office, as yet, produced, but a system of *electioneering*?—the very word breathing of vice and venality.

How perverted your political institutions from their first intent, let your press declare! Sold, alternately, to each party and each partizan; ever silent as respects principles, insolently bold as respects men. Visit not this upon your editors. Let the people take it home unto themselves.

The writers for the public market write for the public taste. To teach the truths they may even distinguish, would be to offend their readers; to investigate principles—to treat of a subject too novel to interest the attention; to explore the actual condition of society, and seek the means for its amelioration, would be to rouse the hostility of wealth, alarm the fears of every speculating aspirant after the same, and muster in battle array every priest, every lawyer, and every politician in the land. While, on the other hand, to libel or to eulogize each pretender to public favor is to feed the credulity and curiosity of every mind unawakened to matters of real interest, and, oftimes, to win credit for courage and patriotism (those prostituted words!) by the very efforts which are more deeply corrupting the feelings and blinding the understandings of the people at home, and bringing into contempt the character of the nation abroad.

When such are the rewards awaiting on the worse and on the better part, are we to marvel that the worse is chosen, and the better left? When bribes are held out to slander, to intrigue, to folly, and to falsehood, are we to sit in judgment upon those who follow where they are led? So long as the people are blind to principles, will they be



deceived by men. So long as they are occupied with trifles, by triflers will they be led. So long as they neglect their own interests, will their press, their teachers, and their rulers, do the same.

I said that I was not here to flatter, and you will think that I have kept my word. Doubtless it were more pleasing to you, and less hazardous for me, to echo all the compliments and proud thanksgivings customary on this day, and which to utter is to ensure popularity; to withhold, to purchase cold looks; while to replace, as I may seem to have done, the honied words of praise by those of censure, may be only to win more of that calumny which my fellow beings have already so bounteously bestowed.

Yet all this am I willing to meet, if, haply, I may be instrumental in shortening the term of those errors and that apathy which now pervert your noble institutions, and neutralize the truths enshrined in this sacred heirloom of your revolution.

Your fathers proclaimed, on the day of which this is the fifty-fourth anniversary, your independence as a nation, and your equal rights as members of the human family. To secure these blessings from foreign assault and domestic attainder, you associated for the mutual defence of your lives, your property, the country you inhabit, and that form of government which appeared to present the greatest advantages and the fewest evils. The result of this association was your national constitution, together with the revision of all your state constitutions or old colonial charters: the same being always subject to future alterations, curtailments, or amendments. Within the pale of these constitutions, and in the mode specified, you decreed it should be lawful to legislate for the correction of evil and promotion of good. Of this evil and this

good you declared *the people* to be the only judges; deciding, however, that, for the prevention of disorder, the opinion of the majority should stand for that of the whole body; and that the view of that majority should be carried into effect through the medium of representatives, chosen for the express object.

This system, simple in all its parts, evidently rests upon two main positions; first, that the people are enlightened judges of their own interests—or, in other words, *that they are, by nature or by education, fitted to distinguish the means by which the greatest happiness may be produced to the whole population*; and secondly, *that the representatives, through whom the people legislate, shall, in all cases, faithfully carry into effect the views of the people whose attorneys they are.*

Now, unless we suppose that all human beings come into the world full grown in intellect and endowed with foreknowledge, we should certainly expect to find some provision for the just training of their minds and habits in childhood, with a view to the high character they are destined in after life to sustain as a self-governing people, and the important duties they are then to fulfil as citizens, as parents, and as human beings. I say we should expect the same instrument which charges the people with the duties of government to suggest the means by which they may be fitted to fulfil the same. I say that common sense would lead us to expect that, before legislation, should come instruction; even as childhood precedes manhood, and the training of the youth decides the character of the adult.

It does appear to me, then, that *the right of equal instruction* should have been enumerated among those human rights which preface your constitutional codes; and that the first act of a self-governing people should



have been that of organizing a plan of rational and republican education, in unison with the bold declaration we are called on this day to celebrate, and which, if practically attempted at the close of your revolutionary struggle, would have rendered you, at this hour, in fact, what you are as yet only in theory—a people equal in rights, free in the exercise of those rights, and happy in the result of that exercise.

But if ever we turn the eye on the past, it should be—not idly to regret, but wisely to reform. The present is ours; the future is before us. The power that was with your fathers is with you. What they omitted, you, wise by their experience and your own, may supply. If they laid the *foundation*, do you lay the *corner stone*, of the republic. If they brake the fetters from the limbs, do you break them from the mind. If they won for their children the right of free action, do you give to yours the knowledge to use it. If they declared you equals at the birth, do you prepare the next generation to be equals through life. Extend to your children the never dying protection, the never slumbering care, of their country—of the nation. Make them, in tender infancy, fellow playmates, fellow learners, fellow laborers; so shall they, when grown to manhood and womanhood, be, in thought, in feeling, in affection, fellow citizens and fellow creatures.

Much labor have ye bestowed in law making; much money have ye expended in the same. Much time, much temper, have ye wasted in canvassing the merits and demerits of individuals—in eulogizing and libelling, by turns, the very men judged most worthy to fill the first office in your gift, until foreign nations must have been in doubt whether the people were most void of truth and decency, or their rulers of honor and honesty. Hot hath been your indignation against vice, and fearful your ven-



geance against crime. Ye have given your thousands to raise jails and gibbets for punishing sinners in this world, and millions to proclaim their damnation in another. Zealous have ye been to spread your fame in foreign lands, and your faith in the farthest regions of the globe. Ye have covered the seas with your ships, and the earth with your missionaries. Ye have rested not until ye rivalled Britain in her commerce, in competitive labor, in mechanical ingenuity, in the triumph of monied wealth, and in the oppression of industry; nor will ye rest, perhaps, until ye rival her in riches and in want; in luxury, in pauperism, and in misery.

Such have been your doings, oh ye people! under the banner of independence and of equal liberty. Ye have followed the footsteps of aristocratic nations, and their character and their destiny shall be yours.

Wisdom and mercy forbid the fulfilment of the prophecy! Noble charter of the freedom of our race, do thou forbid it! As, in the hands of the past generation, thou brakest the sceptre of transatlantic oppression, so, in the hands of the present, do thou break the chains of our vice, and lighten the darkness of our ignorance! As of yore thou nerved the minds of the fathers of this people to assert their rights before the cannon's mouth, so do thou, in this day, inspire their children with wisdom yet more justly to interpret the same, and with courage to make thy truths the law of their hearts, and the rule of their lives! Not in words let thy truths live alone! Not from this parchment let us learn the equal rights of human-kind! Let the spirit which breathes from this instrument animate our thoughts and our exertions! On this day be the pledge of Americans renewed! In the deep solemnity of contrition for past errors and past omissions—in the ardor of hope and generous intent for the future, may they

breathe on this day the vow of '76, and earn, by their efforts, for the next generation, yet more than they received from their fathers!

By this charter, oh ye people! your destinies are placed in your own hands. By this charter ye are free to choose between liberty and slavery, knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice, happiness and misery. Will ye choose the nobler and the better part? Prepare the only means that reason suggests and consistency demands. Add to your institutions what can alone ensure to them permanence, dignity, and utility. Add to your system of republican government one of republican instruction. Then, and then alone, shall these United States be a republic, and their citizens republicans. What hath been said of other nations is true of this—*to be free you have but to will it*. Legislate for the enfranchisement of the rising generation—you, who are doubly its fathers! Suspend, if needs be, all other measures; curtail all other expenditures, postpone all other improvements, until this first of all duties be fulfilled by a self-governing people!

Enough have we of churches, my friends—enough of bridewells and jails. Enough of monuments to the dead, and prisons for the living. Enough, and more than enough, of curious inventions, time and labor-saving skill. Let us learn to enjoy the riches we possess; to distribute the wealth we accumulate; to apply to the benefit of man the works of his own genius. We hear of *internal improvement*. Let us have it; let us see it; let us feel it—in the mind. Let us, at least, end where we ought to have begun. Let us suspend our refinements in machinery, our canals, and our railroads, which, at the present time, under existing arrangements, only encourage monied speculation and stock-jobbing gambling, farther to crush down productive industry, and to blind the mass to the



causes of their ruin. Let us suspend, I say, these labors befitting a race more advanced than ours. Let us turn to the field of human life, rank with every poisonous growth, and thicker sown, from hour to hour, with seeds of corruption! Let us turn to the study of our human condition—to the consideration of our social existence. Let us count all the evils we have there to remedy, all the obstacles to overcome, all the sorrows to alleviate, all the wrongs to redress. To this work of charity and of duty let us apply. Let us give relief to the widow, protection to the orphan, the guardianship of the state to every child in the land. Let us assist oppressed industry in the discharge of the parental duties. Let us form the morals, and advance the happiness of the nation by watching over its education. “These things ought we to do, and, *then*, not to leave the others undone.” But, until these duties be accomplished—until this righteous work be achieved—until every son and daughter in this galaxy of commonwealths shall be equally provided with the means of instruction—shall be raised in the habits of healthy industry—be protected equally from the sufferings and the vice attendant on poverty and on riches—be trained as equals to understand and to exercise the rights set forth in this charter—all your laws and your provisions, your preaching and your punishments, your churches, your prisons, your partial colleges and inefficient schools, your asylums and your hospitals, your restricted commerce and protected manufactures, your canals and your railroads, your taxes and your bounties, your inventions and your improvements, multiplied without object and without end, will work no real benefit to man—will do nothing towards the alleviation of one of the weighty evils which now press on the population—will, and can, tend to no other consequences than farther to vitiate the feelings, confound the understandings,



deprave the habits, and render yet more disproportionate the condition of humankind.

While wealth is considered distinct from enjoyment, and enjoyment is calculated by the luxury of the few instead of the ease of the many—while art and science are applied, not to relieve the labor of industry, but to depreciate its value—while human beings count but as an appendage to the machinery they keep in motion, and the tender strength and dawning intellect of infancy are crippled by forced labor, improper diet, neglect, ill usage, and bad example, think not that canals and railroads are to advance the nation, nor that steamboats and spinning-jennies are to save the world.

The subject now adverted to I have already treated at large in the last discourse delivered in this city “on Existing Evils.” But I feel its importance too deeply not to recur to it often—not to recur to it especially on this day, when the past history, present condition, and future prospects of the nation all crowd upon the mind. Conceiving, as I do, rational education to comprise the whole duty of man, to involve the principles of all law, all liberty, all virtue, and all happiness—to present the only possible cure for every vice in our existing practice, error in our opinions, and evil in our condition, I could not, on this day, speak of your national institutions without adverting to an omission which it behoves you to supply, and which, by the light emitted from this charter, you may see to frame in unison with human nature, with human liberty, and with republican equality.

Until this great oversight be rectified, the revolution we this day commemorate will be incomplete and insufficient; the “declaration” contained in this instrument will be void.

Liberty shall exist only for man when it shall reign in

the mind ; equality, when it shall exist in our knowledge, in our habits, in our enjoyments; and both these righteous principles, and blessed sources of all individual security and national greatness, shall only exist *in practice* when a self-governing people shall *legislate for the equal instruction, the rational education, and the national protection of youth.* The day on which this righteous resolve shall pass the senate of one commonwealth in the Union—that will be for this nation what the Fourth of July, '76, is now for the world.

May the light of knowledge so dawn upon your minds, my fellow citizens ! and the spirit of freedom which erst guided your fathers on this day, so quicken your exertions, that, to us now present, it may be given to celebrate the decree which alone can work out the fulfilment of this declaration, and lead to the equal liberty and equal happiness of all humankind.

### ADDRESS III.

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[Delivered at the opening of the Hall of Science, New-York, on Sunday,  
April 26, 1829.]

THE object that assembles us here this day is the same for which, through all past ages, the wise have labored, and the good have suffered. This object it imports us well to understand, and steadily to keep in view. If misconceived, or if lost sight of, our efforts here will be worse than useless—they will be mischievous; in that while they fail of success, they must bring discredit on the undertaking.

The words engraved over the entrance of this building define its purpose and our object. Raised and consecrated to sectarian faith, it stands devoted this day to universal knowledge—and we, in crossing its threshold, have to throw aside the distinctions of class; the names and feelings of sect or party; to recognise, in ourselves and each other, the single character of human beings and fellow creatures, and thus to sit down, as children of one family, in patience to inquire—in humility to learn.

What I have here suggested as our single object, may appear too simple for some, and prove too hard for others. Oh, may it not prove beyond the power, superior to the reason, of us all!

Born and reared as we have been in a world of strife; fed with error even from the cradle; encouraged, alike by precept and example, to esteem ourselves wise in our own conceit; to imagine that truth lies only in the opinions we



have imbibed ; that to be obstinate is to be consistent ; to be disputatious is to be zealous ; to resent injuries is to show good courage ; to vilify our fellow creatures, to prove our own worthiness ; to reprobate sinners, to substantiate our own morality ; to laugh at the follies of others, to give evidence of our own wisdom—trained, I say, as we have been, to judge and to be judged in severity ; provoked oft-times by persecution to persecute, and driven by injustice to misanthropy—who among us, the best or the wisest that shall have no rebellious spirit to quell, no watch to set upon his lips, no internal censorship to execute, ere he can enter, at peace with all mankind, the courts of union, and sit down, in simplicity of heart, *a pupil in the Hall of Science!*

I would not seem to counsel where I would rather listen, nor to teach where I would rather learn ; but the views and circumstances, heretofore explained, which called me forth to stem the tide of prejudice, and to enter my protest against religious controversies and sectarian hostilities, have necessarily exposed to my individual observation all the worst consequences and tendencies of the evils I have challenged. Few in these days, none in this country, have ventured more, if as much endured, for the great, and good, and solemn cause which assembles us here this day. Let me, then, so far presume as to prefer to my fellow laborers in truth's vineyard, a caution suggested at once by all that I have had occasion to observe and to experience.

There are who apprehend danger to the attempt now made towards national union, and moral and intellectual improvement, from the hostility of constituted authorities and organized bodies. Here lies not my fear. There are, also, who apprehend our failure from the popular indifference, or from the prevailing cowardice and immorality

which the existing forms of society are so calculated to generate. I see no such grounds of discouragement. The spirit of enquiry is abroad; the dawn of a brighter day is kindling in the horizon, and the eyes of *the people* are opening to its observation. I say *of the people*; of that large, and, happily, sounder part of the population who draw their subsistence from the sweat of the brow, and whose industry constitutes at once the physical strength, and the moral prop of the nation. No! my fears look not to the power of the few, nor to the indifference of the many. They look not, my friends, beyond ourselves. Let the soldiers of the van preserve at once good courage and good discipline, and the army of the nation shall follow its lead in confidence and security.

But what must constitute our courage that it be *good*? We may be bold and yet may we be weak. The brave have been overthrown in the onset and in the breach, when the pulses throbbed with enthusiasm, and the word was "victory or death." There is a courage better than that of valor—it is that of wisdom; which, seizing at once on the post to be defended, plants firm the foot, neither to retreat from it in alarm, nor to hurry past it in zeal. And what must supply our discipline? Self government. Firm in principle, fixed in purpose, we must turn neither to the right nor to the left. Wise in the choice of means, temperate in our words, chastened in our feelings, we must pursue truth in the path of knowledge, and, without disputing with errors, seek to substantiate facts.

I am tempted on this to speak farther. I am tempted, at this commencement of our labors, to give utterance to some anxious thoughts which the importance of our enterprise, and the circumstances which surround us, are calculated to inspire. As I have said, I apprehend not the wrath of the few, nor the indifference of the many. Pride



or passion will ever work their own destruction. The more strenuous the opposition to truth, the more speedy will be its triumph. The efforts of a hierarchy, the denunciations of orthodoxy, or the jealousy of wealth and pretension, can do nought against free thoughts and free speech in a country *politically free*. Nor is it in such a country that the many can be long indifferent to their best interests, nor deaf to those who would stimulate to their investigation. I see the field open before us. I see no let nor hindrance in the way of our rapid progress and final triumph, but such as our own deficient virtue may breed, foster, and perpetuate.

The object we have in view, namely, the acquisition and diffusion of knowledge, is so noble, so rational, and so pure, that, in pledging ourselves to its pursuit, we may feel elevated above all unworthy feelings, and not merely willing, but eager, to exchange passion for reason, and to immolate selfishness at the shrine of the public good. But enthusiasm, however ardent and pure, cannot supply the spirit which must sustain our perseverance and effect the extensive reform which we have in view. Zeal may impart energy to our first movements, but will not generate and nourish those steady motives which, by sustaining equal and healthy exertions, can alone ensure success. Anxious, as I feel assured we all are, that the spirit of enquiry now kindled in the public mind should be turned to the best account, and that our efforts in this place should be of lasting benefit to the human race, it seems advisable, that, at this opening of our labors, we well examine, until we distinctly understand, both our object, and the means by which it may be attained.

Our object is simply and singly the acquisition of knowledge, and its diffusion among our fellow creatures. My previous exertions in this city, both as a lecturer and a



writer, have been devoted to the developing the nature of all knowledge, physical and moral, and to the distinguishing those first principles which have been so long and so universally obscured by the sophisms of false learning—the words, maxims, dreams, and hypotheses of man's perverted ingenuity. If the general survey of the field of knowledge, as presented in my public discourses and the pages of the Free Enquirer, be present to your minds, our object in this place cannot be mistaken. You will understand both what knowledge is, and how it can be acquired; and you will understand, moreover, what investigations can be useful to man, and, consequently, suitable to be followed in this place, and what others must necessarily be useless, and, consequently, unsuitable. But, far better will you understand our object here, and distinguish between the profitable and profitless in human enquiry, when you shall have entered on the patient development of nature's phenomena, under the guidance of your various scientific instructors. I have presented you only with an outline of the whole; a general view of that field of varied interest and untiring beauty, through which masters of more practical experience and minute research will now undertake to lead you.

Under the wise direction of men of science, honest enough to reveal what they know, and bold enough to be silent—(for, alas! in these days of error even silence may be a crime;) bold enough, I say, to be silent where they are ignorant—under the guidance of such friends your steps cannot err, and your minds must gradually expand to the perception of all those truths most important for man to understand.

What, then, I am most anxious we should bear in mind is, *that we have all to be learners*. Ask the most experienced philosopher, whose patient mind has explored all

the paths of discovered knowledge, and added new wealth to the stores of the human intellect—ask him, and he will tell you he is yet a pupil. Ask him, and he will tell you that the span of human life sufficeth not to explore the whole even of the observable wonders of nature—wondrous at least to our limited perceptions and finite existence; while, beyond the stretch of our vision, as evinced by the microscope and telescope, he will tell you that the phenomena of nature extend through the infinitely little and the infinitely great, in duration and extension, without limit as without end. Oh, who hath said that science teaches pride, when with her alone is humility! Who hath said, that to study the field of nature can generate self-conceit, when he who should know all that by human senses and faculties can be known, would only best understand that he knew, as it were, *nothing!*

An ingenious poet hath sung:

“A little learning is a dangerous thing;”

I will not say that, nor will I say:

“Drink deep or taste not of the spring;”

but this I will say—be sure that ye mistake not between what is now *esteemed* learning, and what *is* knowledge. Drink of the right spring, and drink little or drink much, so far as ye drink ye shall be wise. Yet this, above all things: *speculate not farther than you know.* Endeavor to curb that futile curiosity, which, fostered by a vicious education, is ever winging the human imagination beyond what the eye hath seen, the touch examined, and the judgment compared. Let us unite on the safe and sure ground of fact and experiment, and we can never err; yet better, we can never differ. Let us investigate within



these walls what are to us all realities, and will yield to us all useful truths. The field of nature is before us to explore; the world of the human heart is with us to examine. In these lie for us all that is certain, and all that is important.

What matter to us by what, by whom, for how long, from whence, to what limits of space, through what extent of time, the vast ethereal, in which our atom globe performs its revolutions, is peopled with sentient existence. How may we decide whether genii, or demigods, or beings unnamed and unconceived, live, and breathe, and exult in life through all the bright worlds which stud our starlit heaven? Nay, or could we decide, how should the knowledge profit us in this our removed, but, to us, all sufficient sphere? Were our human attainments, indeed, co-extensive with human observation, and our human wisdom all sufficient for our human exigencies, then might there be some apology for our borrowing the kaleidoscope of fancy, and gazing, through it, into the moon and beyond the stars. Were all our human duties understood and fulfilled, all the joys of earth developed, and its woes removed, then might those speculations be more excusable, which now steal our attention and our sympathies from the sphere we occupy, and the fellow creatures, whose wants, interests, joys and sorrows should be all our own.

But how far we are from this fulness of human knowledge and human happiness, let nature with all her unexplored phenomena—let earth with all her wrongs and all her miseries—let our own hearts with all their bitterness—our own minds with all their prejudices, bear witness and attest. Oh, then, let us, in this place at least, lay aside dreaming, and apply to observing! Not that I would presumptuously dispute, or uselessly reason, with the dreams of any fellow creature: I would simply lead all to



distinguish between their dreams and their knowledge, to estimate the value of the one, and the futility of the other, and to perceive that within the horizon of human observation we may all enquire with profit, and in fellowship; without that horizon only with danger of error, and with certainty of differing.

Seeing, then, the useful discoveries to be made in the world of nature as existing without us, and the world of the human heart as existing within us, and seeing, also, the interminable disputes fomented by enquiry abstracted from these, let us preserve our popular meetings in this place uncontaminated and undistracted by religious discussions or opinionative dissensions.

I would apply this exhortation equally to the sceptic as to the believer, and to the believer as to the sceptic. Are we believers? Let us believe as we may, but let us believe peacefully, in the depths of the heart, that our belief offend not that of our neighbor. Do we see with the eye of faith? Let us see what we may, and dream what we will, but let us dream at home. In our own closets be our worship, whether of god or gods, saints, angels, prophets, or blessed virgins; but here—here, in the hall of union, sacred to peace and to knowledge, let us study that book which all can read, and, reading, none dispute—the field of nature, and the tablet of the human mind. Or, on the other hand, have we learned to doubt the lessons of books, and the laws of men, let us beware in what spirit we set forth our scepticism, lest, haply, while discarding the dogmas, we retain the dogmatism, and lend, even to truth, the tone of presumption, and the spirit of error.

It follows not, that in having lost some of our credulity, we must have lost our intolerance, nor that in correcting some of our opinions, we must have changed our feelings, and amended our habits. The effects of erroneous edu-

cation, and the influence of unfavourable circumstances are, more or less, with us all. As believers, we have learned censoriousness with our creed of faith; as heretics or sceptics, we have learned intolerance from persecution. Judging or judged, inflicting or enduring, our bosoms have been filled with bitterness from our youth up; our hearts estranged from each other, and our thoughts still bent rather on proving others wrong, than on seeking the right for ourselves. It is for this cause—it is for the frailties of temper, the errors of judgment, the harshness of feeling existing in us all, that I would deprecate in this place all discussions of speculative or abstract opinion. Were we all reasonable, gentle, indulgent, to discuss any or all subjects, real or imaginary, might be useful, or, at the least, amusing; but while we are all irrational, perverse, ill natured, violent, prone to misinterpret, to offend in our manner, to irritate in our language, to wound and to be wounded, to give and to receive alarm, to judge ourselves in pride, and others with contempt—while we are as we are, and as all we see, or hear, or experience, in an ill regulated state of society, combines to keep us, we are unfit to grapple with each other's thoughts—ill prepared to elicit truth by the shock of opinions in the subtle field of argument.

I mean not altogether to condemn religious discussions while the world is overrun with conflicting religious superstitions; but, methinks, in our popular meetings, I would condemn them here. We must bear in mind, that we come together in this place as members of a family long divided and estranged by feuds and strifes; that we see in each other wanderers from every school of faith—it may be Jews, Christians, deists, materialists, with every variety of sect and class existing within the pale of each. Surely, then, prudence, if no higher virtue, demands that we set a watch upon our lips, lest, haply, we offend where



it is our object to conciliate, and divide where we are assembled to unite.

Permit me here to reiterate an observation which I have already had frequent occasion to prefer, that the only sure way to correct erroneous opinions is to present facts to the mind. The more we know, the less, in the popular sense of the word, do we *believe*. The better we understand the phenomena of nature in the visible and tangible world without us, and in the mental, moral, and physical world within us, the more just and perspicuous must be all our ideas.

It is possible, indeed, to subvert, by process of reasoning, many human superstitions, and to confute by the *ad absurdum* many books, maxims, and statutes honored as wise, or worshipped as divine. But let us remember, that to expose errors is not necessarily to distinguish truths; a train of deductive logic may suffice for the one, but dispassionate observation and accurate knowledge can alone suffice for the other.

I know that, up to this hour, the least safe and the least effectual method of disengaging the popular mind of error has been the one employed. This has been, perhaps, the necessary result of the system of religious teaching so long prevalent; the nature of the evil suggesting that of the remedy, and the virulence of the clergy, struggling, at one and the same time, for the profits and the tenets of their craft, provoking, perhaps, an excusable, but certainly an objectionable, hostility on the part of their opponents. While the advocates of mental darkness found their strength in teaching religious opinions, the friends to mental enfranchisement might naturally be tempted to seek theirs in teaching the opposite. But, as I have already attempted to show, in my introductory discourses to the people of this city, opinions, whether true



or false, are no proper subject for teaching at all. We have each of us to form our own, and we *must* each of us form our own, if we would really understand *what our opinions are*—know their foundation, and perceive their practical consequences. All that a judicious instructor will attempt is to present to the mind, in suitable train and order, such evidence as is supplied by nature herself—in other words, to fertilize the intellect with knowledge, and to leave it to draw, on all subjects, its own free, fair, and unbiassed conclusions.

The practice, but too generally followed up to this hour, of promulgating laws, establishing creeds, laying down maxims, and *teaching opinions*, has tended to affect our species with a mental paralysis.

Accustomed to receive our knowledge, so called, from the *ipse dixit* of books, instead of seeking it for ourselves in the bosom of nature and the occurrences passing around us, and, again, to receive our opinions from the nurse, the schoolmaster, or the priest, we but too often, nay, but too universally, live and die without exercising more of our faculties than our memory and our imagination—closing our eyes upon this beautiful world, and resigning our human existence, ignorant alike of the treasures so thickly strewed in the one, and the powers inherent in the other. So dead, or, rather, so unawakened within us, are the nobler faculties of observation and judgment, that, even if aroused for a moment to doubt the authorities before which we were trained in infancy to bow our reason, we still shrink from the labor of being an authority to ourselves, and, at one and the same moment that we turn from the priest, have recourse to the philosopher—willing to see with his eyes, to hear with his ears, and to think with his thoughts, so that we may but escape the labor of exercising our own. Like the vain and impatient tyrant

of antiquity, we must still ask of our instructor, not a royal road to the truths of geometry alone, but to all truths in matter or in mind. We would know all things without examining any thing, and, above all, little curious of the knowledge which is useful and attainable, we must ever crave that which neither concerns us nor has an existence for us.

Truly, if we consider the state of our own minds—our willingness, nay, our very anxiety, to be bitted, and bridled, and led through any of error's labyrinths, rather than to seek for ourselves the paths of truth—truly, I say, considering our own indolence and our own gullibility, we have small reason to exclaim against the presumption of priests or the dishonesty of teachers. Methinks we should rather bless their moderation for cheating us so little in proportion to our credulity, and riding us so gently if compared with our slavishness! The marvel is, (permit me the freedom,) not that we should encounter much knavery, but that we should meet with some honesty. The marvel is, that any should honor truth so much and love man so well, as to attempt the enlightening of ignorance or the correcting of error, without either tiring of the task or betraying the cause.

Easy were that task and rapidly triumphant that cause, could we understand that correct opinions may be found only through knowledge, and that the task of the instructor is only to show us facts, and thus to lead us to first principles. But, so accustomed are we to be crammed with opinions and dictated to in belief, that the faithful guide who may refuse to feed our diseased appetite may hardly win our ears, or command our sickly attention. Would he point to those interesting phenomena to which our eyes are now, as it were, hermetically sealed, he is met by the question—*what god he worships*. Is it explained to



us that cause and effect are words, either without meaning, or expressive simply of the train of occurrences and succession of changes ever taking place around or within us, we ask of our teacher, *if he believes in a first cause.* Does a moralist instigate us to investigate the numerous ills which afflict our existence, and, with a view to the remedy of these, to study the physiology of our own bodies, the operations of our own minds, and then to distinguish what in human practice is in violation and what in unison with the laws of our being, he is interrupted by enquiries as to his belief *in the distinct existence of a soul and its future immortality in another world.* The disappointed instructor in vain interrupts the train of his observations to explain, that, as his knowledge is necessarily bounded by the horizon of his observation, so his instruction can extend no farther than his knowledge; and that when he shall have communicated all the facts gleaned in his studies, it will rest with his pupils to draw such conclusions as those facts may generate. Instead of appreciating the respect thus paid to human truth and human liberty, his hearers, accustomed by long habit to submit their reasons to whomsoever will take the trouble to ride them, find perchance offence in that he will not feed their curiosity by tampering with their credulity, nor spare them the necessary labor of mastering the sciences, and studying human life in conjunction with the human frame, in order that they may think on all subjects for themselves.

But let the friends of man be of good courage in a good cause. Let them not faint with weariness under the heedlessness of folly, the obstinacy of error, nor the seeming ingratitude of ignorance. Above all, let them not swerve from the strait and clear path in which it must be their aim to lead the erring and warring family of human-



kind. Let them be true to themselves as children of science—true to their fellow creatures as the simple expounders of nature, and, by slow degrees, the ears of men shall be won, and their minds composed to reflection.

I am aware of the common persuasion that science regards only what are called scientific men—which means, in plain language, that *knowledge is only good to be made a trade of*. It seems in the order of things, that the surgeon should understand the structure of our frame, in order that he may repair it if injured; that the physician should study its physiology and pathology, in order to heal it if diseased. But it strikes us not, that did we ourselves possess the same knowledge, we might oft prevent both the injury and the disease, or apply, ourselves, the remedy. It seems natural that the mechanic should study mechanics, the pharmacist chemistry, the lawyer law, the priest religion; not perceiving that, while each part and parcel of human learning remains confined to its ostensible professors, the public at large has no means of estimating its real value, nor the possessor himself of understanding all its bearings and relations, distinguishing its truths, or detecting its fallacies. Not seeing, also, that, in this manner, every facility is afforded to the crafty and the superficial to palm upon society deficiency for skill, or error for truth. Not seeing, moreover, that all the real sciences are so related and conjoined, that no individual can thoroughly understand any one, without some general acquaintance with all. Not perceiving, in fine, that it is in the absence of this general acquaintance, that false knowledge, pretended science, erroneous institutions, unwise expenditures, absurd customs, and every species of fraud and folly obtain among men, and are handed down, from parent to child, like the heirlooms of aristocracy in feudal Europe.

But I am aware, also, that the word science is associated in the popular mind with mental fatigue, abstract study, and scholastic application. True it is, that, according to the method of instruction now usually followed, all these charges may be brought, with more or less truth, against every useful, no less than every ornamental, acquirement. Yet, I think, those who have attended the opening classes already held in this building, under all the disadvantages of deficient accommodation and imperfect arrangement, will incline to admit, that the acquisition and imparting of knowledge is not necessarily the dry, abstruse, and uninteresting occupation that the perverted ingenuity of our ancestors had contrived to make it. I am tempted here to borrow the words of a teacher, whose lucid genius would reflect honor on the country which gave him birth, could genius belong to any country, which more truly belongs to the world. "Philosophy," says Alexander B. Johnson, in his lectures on language, as delivered in Utica. New-York, "philosophy is not necessarily the frowning, sluggish divinity that her ministers have injudiciously represented. Her dress may be splendid, her decorations brilliant; the clearest light should always illuminate her throne, and disputation be banished from her presence."

Be it our object, then, to disenrobe philosophy of the cumbrous disguise with which human error hath veiled her features, and to present her in all her native loveliness—heightened, polished, and enhanced by all the glow and the grace which judicious genius may know to impart; but never distorted by the whimsical and meretricious ornaments of depraved taste or perverted ingenuity. Be it our object to discover truths where alone they are to be found, in the bosom of nature; and let us understand, that without a perception of these truths—that is, without a general view of the whole range of the sciences—we can



neither judge ourselves nor our fellow creatures, possess any opinion, nor pursue any practice, in full certainty of its justice towards others and its utility to ourselves.

To obtain and impart this general view of the whole field of human knowledge, is the object of this institution. Whenever, therefore, this building shall be occupied by a teacher, nominated by the trustees as a popular instructor, it would appear to me desirable that his subject should be invariably one of explanation, not of disputation—one whose text shall be chosen within the pale of knowledge, not sought in the limbo of opinions.

Whenever this building shall not be occupied for the popular meetings under the direction of the trustees, it will be open for the use of any respectable teacher, be his subject what it may. Orthodoxy itself, if the day should ever come (which good sense and good feeling avert) that it should be driven forth as have been the advocates of truth, from house to house, until every door is shut against them—let orthodoxy itself here find a refuge, and win, if it can, the ears and hearts of men by the threats and denunciations of its gospel.

For objecting to religion, either as a topic of discussion or subject of instruction in our popular meetings, I would prefer two reasons: first, that religion appertains not to the table of human knowledge; and secondly, that we see it every where give rise to interminable disputes and all varieties of bad feeling.

For objecting to party politics, I should prefer the same reasons. They have nothing to do with knowledge, and every thing to do with quarrelling.

Opinions apart from facts, and men apart from principles, may assist vanity to a field of display, ambition to one of power or profit, and passion to one of contention, but can never supply matter of interest to a people simply



and honestly desirous of improvement, and aiming at union. We cannot enter the hall of science to learn nor to teach Christianity, nor Judaism, nor Islamism, nor paganism, nor deism, nor materialism; we can enter it only to study the world we live in, to study ourselves as inhabitants of that world, and to form our opinions in conformity with the results of our studies.

I have said—to *study ourselves*. Oh, my fellow beings, what a study is here! What a field of discovery—what a world unexplored is that of our own being! What truths yet unperceived, what duties unexercised, what faculties unimproved, what delights unenjoyed, are in the nature—the neglected, the slandered, the perverted, the outraged nature of man!

Let not bold enquiry apprehend that the field of human knowledge is confined in its horizon, and uninteresting in its details. While every path is rich with treasures and rich with novelty, there is one—and that the noblest and the fairest—on which the restless mind of man hath barely thrown a glance.

The master science—the centre path and fairest avenue in the field of knowledge, and from which and into which all others, if rightly followed, would be found to branch and converge—the *science of human life* remains to this hour in its infancy. We have dived into the secrets of external nature—we have pierced the blue ether and tracked the courses and revolutions of its planets, its systems, its comets, and its universe of suns; we have laid bare the bowels of the earth, disclosed their hidden treasures, and brought to light the past phenomena of primeval worlds; we have passed around our globe and explored its realms and climates through the scorching tropics to the icy barrier of the poles; we have torn the lightning from the clouds, and jewels from the depths of

the ocean; we have bowed the elements to our will, and, appropriating and guiding their strength, have achieved more than the fabled exploits of demigods, or the miracles of prophets and saints—we have, in truth, in ingenuity proved ourselves magicians, in power all but gods; yet is our knowledge only ignorance, and our wisdom that of babes, seeing that while exploring the universe we have left unexplored the human heart, and while mastering the earth we have still to master ourselves.

Oh! let us not fear, that within the atmosphere of our own world, in the powers and wants of our own nature, and in the woes of human life, as originating in human error, that we may not find a field of enquiry more than sufficient to fill our time, enchain our thoughts, and call into action every latent faculty and feeling of our nature.

Let, then, morals, or *the science of human life*, assume, among a people boasting themselves free, (and free, rightly interpreted, would mean *rational*,) the place of religion. Let us, instead of speculating and disputing where we can discover nothing, observe and enquire where we can discover every thing.

Surely it befits a people acknowledging political liberty, to investigate the meaning of the word, and the power involved in the principle. Surely it concerns a people claiming equal rights to examine how they may exert those rights with a view to equal benefit. What has been done towards this, let the state of society attest. How far we have studied human life as a science, let our human condition bear witness. How far the people of this land have improved their republican institutions, or reduced to practice the declaration of '76, let the state of society declare. We speak of equality, and we are divided into classes; of self-government, and we fit not ourselves to govern. We hear of law and legislation, and the mass of the people un-

derstand not the one, and take no interest in the other. We complain of existing evils, and seek neither their source nor their remedy; we see pauperism on the increase, and vice travelling in her footsteps, and we ask only for more jails and larger poorhouses.

Say, have we suggested here no subjects of interesting enquiry and profitable investigation? Should a self-governing people not understand the nature and object of government? Should they charter representatives to make statutes in the dark; and, leaving lawyers to interpret the laws which lawyers have made, rest satisfied to obey the reading of which we see not the justice? Should they permit taxation and encourage contributions, without directing the stream of their subtracted wealth into channels of national utility? Should they profess equal representation, and possess no equal instruction? Or, not possessing equal instruction, should they profess equal rights?

All these, and more questions, it behoves us to ask and to answer. Every contradiction and deficiency in our institutions it concerns us to discover, and discovering, to supply or to remedy. Here may the good work begin. Here may we commence the work of reform by fitting ourselves to be reformers. Here, studying our common nature as human beings, our common interests as fellow citizens, may we present to a republican people a first example of republican union and republican enquiry. Here, too, let our efforts but be sustained, and we may present a first sample of that republican instruction whose dawn shall bring hope to the nation, and in whose fulness shall be salvation.

Far off may be the day of universal peace and universal knowledge; but every effort made, and every word spoken, approaches us to its dawn. And even now see we not omens of that dawn? Feel we not something stir-



ring in the air? Hear we not, from time to time, some faint but spirit-stirring sounds prophetic of the light, and the life, and the animation which are to come? See we not ears opening? Perceive we not understandings awakening? Is not the spirit of enquiry abroad, and shall not the truths which would now startle the ear, ere long sink into the heart? All things may we hope for man, should our efforts in this place be successful. Let us water the seed we have planted, and from it shall spring a tree whose branches will shadow the land. Let us be true to the cause we have espoused, and it shall conquer the world. Let us preserve union and pursue truth, distinct from class or sect, or opinionative association, and yearly, monthly, daily shall we wax in strength, and our opponents grow fewer and weaker. There is no backsliding in knowledge. The human mind cannot unlearn facts, nor forget first principles. The reason, once cleared of prejudice by means of science, can never re-enter within the fogs of error. She will not experience seasons of darkness, doubts, and misgivings; require the stirring calls of supernatural grace, or the frenzied fits and hysteria of miraculous revivals. Her operations are silent, peaceful, certain, ever enduring, ever gathering in light, in strength, in security. Let us, then, gather under her peaceful standard, and present a point of union to which gradually all of the present generation, not absolutely lost to reason and common sense, and, yet more especially, all the young and the ingenuous, may gather, until the nation, collected in her might, prepares, through enlightened legislatures, for the training together as one family, all the children of the land in national or state institutions.

Then, in that day, shall we see equality! Then, in that day, shall we possess liberty—beyond the fear of loss, beyond the possibility of assault! Then shall we dwell

in a free country ! Then shall we be a free and virtuous, a self-governing and self-respecting people; for then shall we be an enlightened people.

There is no halfway in these matters. There is no liberty for any until there is liberty for all. There is no surety for liberty but only in equality. And let us remember, that there is no equality but what has its seat in the mind and feelings. All—all is there—virtue, honor, truth, law, liberty and knowledge ! Build up these in the human breast, and we shall see human beings walk uprightly.

Your institutions may declare equality of rights, but we shall never possess those rights until you have *national* schools. Your legislatures may enact prohibitory laws, and laws offensive and defensive, protective or invasive, it matters little which ; our liberties will never be secure, for they will never be understood, until you have *national* schools. Your spiritual teachers may preach damnation and salvation henceforward through all the eternity of existence, and we shall never be wise nor happy, peaceful nor charitable, useful in our generation, nor useful through our descendants, to all generations, until ye open the flood-gates of knowledge, and let her pure waters fertilize all the land.

As preparatory, then, to greater measures, and prophetic of extensive reform, our meeting in this place, on this day, and for our proposed object, may mark an era in the moral history of the republic. The greatest events have grown out of the smallest ; the most important reforms have been generated by fewer individuals than now fill these walls, and effected too in countries less free to thought, to speech, and to action, than this favored land. Here all is possible to truth if sustained by perseverance. In revolutionized America she has not to contend with the bayo-

net, nor to encounter the scaffold and the dungeon. The battle of blood is here happily fought, and the sword of freedom sheathed, as we trust, for ever. Yet great is the victory she hath yet to achieve. It is over the tyranny of ignorance, and the slavery of the mind. Noble be her weapons, and spotless as her cause ! let her seek them at the hand of knowledge, and wield them in the spirit of peace, of charity, and of love to man.



[The following odes, written by F. W. for the occasion, were sung ; the first previous to the commencement of the address, the second at its close.]

## ODE I.

LONG have the nations slept: hark to that sound!  
The sleep is ended, and the world awakes:  
Man riseth in his strength and looks around,  
While on his sight the dawn of reason breaks.

Lo! Knowledge draws the curtain from his mind;  
Quells Fancy's visions, and his spirit tames,  
Deep in his breast that law to seek and find,  
Which kings would write in blood, and priests in flames.

Shout, earth! the creature man, till now the foe  
Of thee, and all who tread thy parent breast,  
Henceforth shall learn himself and thee to know,  
And in that knowledge shall be wise and blest.

## ODE II.

OH, sons of men! throw round your eyes  
Upon the earth, the seas, the skies!  
Say, doth not all, to every sense,  
Show beauty and magnificence?

See hill and vale with verdure spread!  
Behold the mountain lift his head,  
In stature, strength, and power sublime,  
Unscathed by storm, untouched by time!

And see the flower which gems the sward!  
List to the pipe of evening bird—  
The streams, the winds, the balmy breeze  
Making soft music with the trees.

And see the glories of the night !  
 The deep blue vault with stars of light,  
 The silver clouds, the odorous air—  
 All soft, and still, and sweet, and fair !

And oh ! that hour of matin prime,  
 The cool, the fresh, the joyous time,  
 When Sol, as if refreshed by sleep,  
 Springs blazing from the kindled deep :

Then mark how nature with delight  
 Exults and kindles at the sight ;  
 Earth, ocean, air—above, around,  
 All full of life, and stir, and sound !

Yes ! all unto the outward sense  
 Shows beauty and magnificence ;  
 All fair—unless that world we scan,  
 That *moral* world, as made by man.

To all earth's blessings deaf and blind,  
 Lost to himself and to his kind,  
 With mad presumption, lo ! he tries  
 To pierce the ether of the skies.

His fancy wing'd to worlds unknown,  
 He scorns the treasures of his own ;  
 By fears of hell and hopes of heaven,  
 His noble mind to madness driven !

Oh ! first of all the tribes of earth,  
 Wake to a knowledge of thy worth ;  
 Then mark the ills of human life,  
 And heal its woes, and quench its strife.

Victim and tyrant thou, oh man !  
 Thy world, thyself, thy fellows scan,  
 Nor forward cast an anxious eye,  
 Who knows to live, shall know to die.

**REPLY**  
TO THE  
TRADUCERS OF THE FRENCH REFORMERS  
OF THE YEAR 1789,

*As given by Frances Wright, in the Park Theatre,  
New-York, January 31st, 1829, at the close of her  
discourse on Religion.*

[Among the many artifices devised by the clergy of New-York, during the first and second delivery of these discourses, was the circulation of inflammatory placards and pamphlets, in which the object of the lecturer was represented to be nothing short of a universal insurrection of the people against, and massacre of, themselves. The flying missiles of the tract house, were backed by the heavier artillery of the daily papers; when, upon the night of the meeting held in Tammany Hall, in reprobation of the memorials presented to congress for the interruption of the Sunday mails, an article appeared in the Evening Post, which occasioned the following reply. It was first pronounced at the close of the third lecture, and repeated on the night of the fourth, for the reason explained by the lecturer.]

THE subject which has engaged our attention this evening, will permit me, without irrelevancy, to repeat the observations with which I concluded my discourse of Saturday. I am influenced to this repetition, by the knowledge, that many were prevented on that occasion from attendance, by the public duty which they were then summoned to fulfil, and the style and manner of whose fulfilment presents another evidence of the stirring spirit which is abroad, and the radical reform in opinion, as in practice, now in preparation for this brightest portion of the



civilized world. I am tempted to this repetition also, by all the crowd of solemn and sacred recollections, which the circumstance that elicited my observations of Saturday had outraged in my bosom ; and which, allied as I have been in thought and feeling with the surviving veterans of the French revolution, and with the martyred and exiled patriots of Europe's latter years, who drank their inspiration from the heroes of '89, challenges in me, from outraged friendship, no less than from outraged truth, a reply as public and as bold as hath been the slander. With the view of rendering that reply more public, I shall here repeat it, and farther publish it in the columns of the Free Enquirer.

True it is, that the attack against human liberty, and its advocates, which challenged my notice, stands not singly and alone ; it forms only an item in the long tissue of falsehoods and misrepresentations with which the annals of human improvement have been sedulously darkened and confounded.

Let us listen to sermon, peruse religious tract, or religious essay, yea, or political journal under orthodox influence, or clerical dictation, what find we but exhortations to passive obedience ? laudatory apostrophes to thrones, dominations, and powers ? insidious reflections, or open denunciations against enquiry, under the name of infidelity ; against honest opinion, under the name of heresy ; against self-respecting virtue, under the name of vice ; against resistance to oppression, under the name of sedition ; and against revolution, under the name of rebellion ? But I shall ask ye, for the moment, to look no farther than the editorial columns of the Evening Post, of Thursday last, in which, setting aside the momentary object, and consequent personal allusions of the writer, we find him openly advocating feudal despotism, and classing political revolu-

tions among the crimes most inimical to man and odious to God.

This spiritual oracle presents the citizens of New-York with a quotation from the speeches of Edmund Burke, made *after that statesman had sold himself for place and pension to the throne he had once so boldly defied*. In these quotations we are presented with the foulest slanders against noble deeds and noble men ever pronounced by traitor or slave!

Know the citizens of New-York, who fathered the French revolution of '89, thus upheld in their daily journals to execration and opprobrium? The virtuous, the venerable, the venerated Lafayette. Know they the principles then proclaimed, and to which a Baillie, a La Rochefoucauld, a Condorcet, a Madame Roland, set the seal of their blood? They were the same signed by a Franklin, an Adams, a Jefferson, and all the worthies of '76. They were the same to which the people of this land stand pledged in life, property, and honor. And while the fallen, the sold, the misguiding and misguided Burke, was thus confounding times and dates, blaspheming glorious names and more glorious eras, perverting words and perplexing principles, were the sages and heroes of '89, the virtuous men, and high-minded women, who had reared in Europe the standard of civil liberty and mental emancipation, expiring in sublime philosophy on the scaffolds of the *religious*—ay! of the *religious* Robespierre!

I have thus again condescended upon the pages of this journal, with a view to the exposure of the literary and religious fraud, now carried on under cover of the popular ignorance, through every vehicle of popular instruction. Not a fact but is misinterpreted—not a name but is slandered—not a system, not a principle, not a book, page, word, but is travestied, tortured, perplexed, and belied,



to serve the purposes of clerical ambition, and support a system of error and fraud, as inimical to the interest of the many, as it is abetting and flattering to the pretensions of the few.

And now, I will ask, how that very large portion of the community, who glean their only information respecting past or present events, from newspapers, magazines, tracts, and pamphlets, all more or less under a similar influence with the Evening Post, are to judge rightly respecting things, or respecting men. I have now in my hand, a bill, or tract, I know not how the flying paper should be designated, which was distributed, among many others, to the citizens who attended the meeting at Tammany Hall, on Saturday evening. In this we find a similar confusion of times and circumstances, causes and effects, as that observed upon in the Evening Post. Here, again, all the horrors acted in France, subsequent to the bright dawn of the revolution, by an ignorant populace, excited to frenzy by the subtle emissaries of the British ministry, and by the hired incendiaries of a discomfited court, aristocracy, and priesthood, are presented to the uninformed reader, as the work of philosophers and political reformers.

I shall hereafter take occasion to elucidate in the pages of the Free Enquirer, some of the leading events and characters of the French revolution; when it will be seen that the virtuous supporters of order, peace, brotherly union, and brotherly love, were the patriots and philosophers who, having raised the standard of equal liberty, died in its defence; while the ignorant and brutal Robespierre was signing their death-warrants in his chamber, and decreeing in his legislative hall, by act of assembly, *the existence of a God, and consecrating a day for his especial worship.*

And how shall the people judge between what is and



what is not, until knowledge shall be present to the mind? And how shall knowledge be present to the mind, so long as faith is made the only subject of instruction. Shall, then, the object for which we are met in this place, be defeated or deferred? Shall knowledge never own a shrine, nor truth a temple? Will a free people never pronounce the little words, LET US ENQUIRE; the modest and rational words, LET US LEARN?

The first of these was the fact that the United States had a large population of free men, and that these men were not only free but also equal in the eyes of the law. This was a radical departure from the feudal system of Europe, where the majority of the population was bound to the land and to their lords. The American colonists had inherited the English tradition of individual rights, and they had fought a long and hard struggle to secure these rights for themselves. The result was a new form of government, one that was based on the consent of the governed and that guaranteed the rights of all its citizens.

The second of these factors was the fact that the United States had a large territory, and that this territory was not only vast but also fertile. This was a great advantage, for it allowed the American people to grow their own food and to produce goods for export. It also allowed them to expand westward, to seek new lands and new opportunities. The American people were not content with the small, crowded colonies of the East; they wanted more space, more freedom, and more opportunity. They were determined to make the most of the land that God had given them, and they were not willing to be limited by the restrictions of a feudal system. They were determined to create a new society, one that was based on the principles of liberty and equality.

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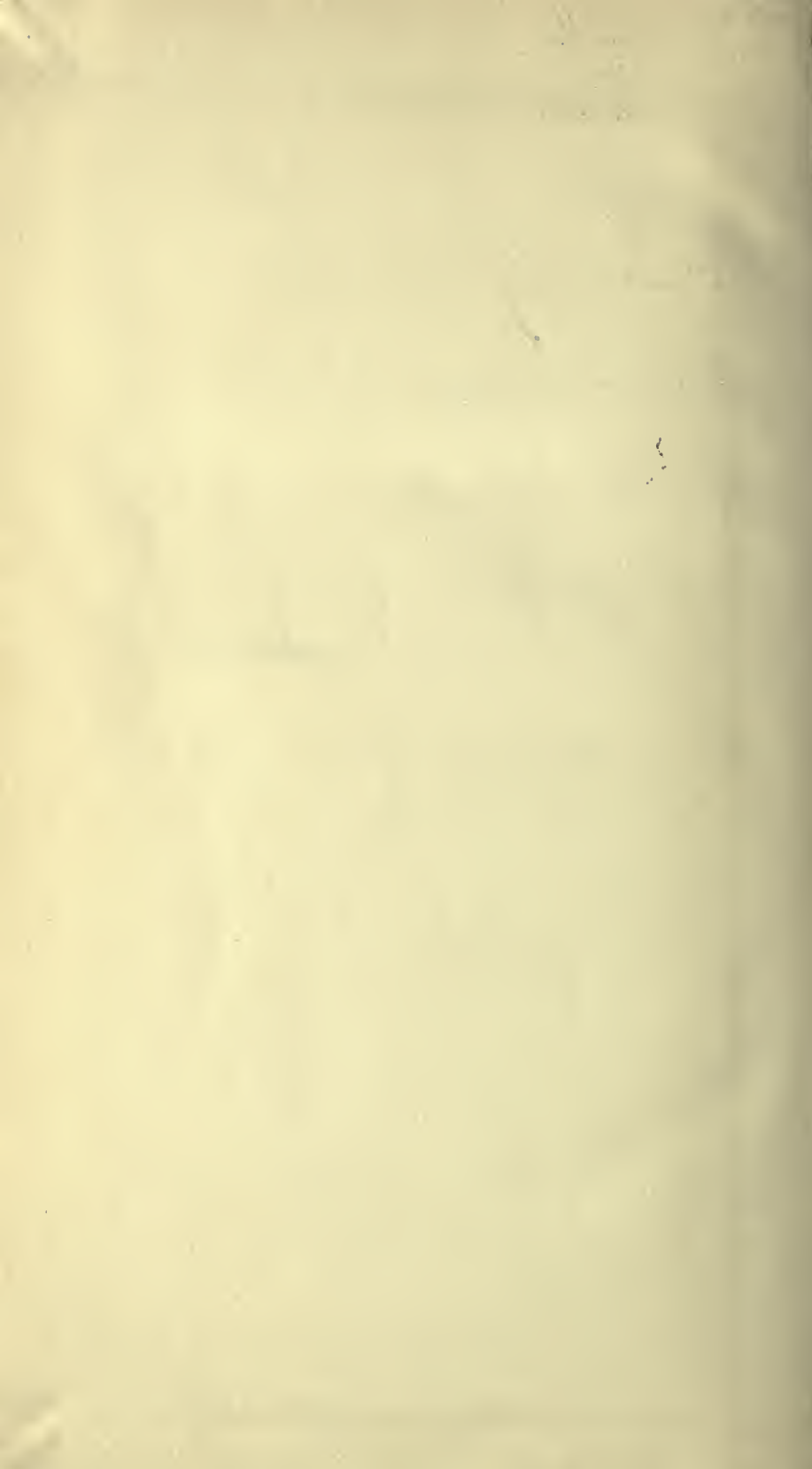
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- 1-year loans may be recharged by bringing  
books to NRLF
- Renewals and recharges may be made  
4 days prior to due date

**DUE AS STAMPED BELOW**

**MAR 12 2005**



